SHROPSHIRE FOLK-LORE.

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SHROPSHIRE FOLK-LORE:

A Sheaf of Gleanings.

EDITED BY

CHARLOTTE SOPHIA BURNE

FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF

GEORGINA F. JACKSON.

'The history of no people can be said to have been written so long as its superstitions and beliefs in past times have not been studied.'—*Professor Rhys.*

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DEDICATION.

TO

William Henderson, Esquire,

AUTHOR OF 'FOLK-LORE OF THE NORTHERN COUNTIES,'

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF

ADVICE AND AID,

FREELY GIVEN TO A STRANGER,

TO WHICH THIS BOOK OWES

MORE THAN THE EDITOR CAN SAY.

PREFACE.

IT will be best, I think, once more to tell the story of this book from the beginning. My own connection with it is entirely accidental, and formed no part of the original plan.

It was in the year 1870 that Miss Jackson first conceived the idea of the 'Shropshire Word-Book.' In the course of the journeys which she took in order to collect materials for her work by means of intercourse with the Shropshire peasantry, she gathered up, together with words and sounds, a mass of old-world stories and ideas sufficient to give rise to a project of following up her first book by another, which should deal with the subject of Shropshire Folk-Lore.

This project was the means of my becoming acquainted with her. In 1872 I made some MS. notes of local Folk-Lore for the Severn Valley Naturalists' Field Club, which the then Secretary of the Club asked me to allow Miss Jackson to see. From this our friendship, as I am proud to call it, grew; and at length, when increasing illness made Miss Jackson fear that she might not be able to finish her double task, she placed her Folk-Lore Gleanings in my hands, and begged me to carry on her work.

These Gleanings form the nucleus of the present volume.

Besides all that was gathered in the course of "dialecting tours," as Miss Jackson used to call them, her own recollections of the Mid-Shropshire home of her youth supplied various valuable notes, and she also received useful information from many friends living in the county, whose lives and occupations brought them much into contact with their poorer neighbours.

Much has been added to the collection since I received it, chiefly from my own knowledge of the habits and ideas prevailing around my early home at Edgmond, on the eastern borders of the county—for

though Staffordshire is my 'native,' as the folk say, I am Shropsh[illegible] foster-child. More again has been gleaned in the course of [illegible] (sometimes purposely undertaken) to friends and relations in diff[illegible] parts of the county, and very much from conversation with intelli[illegible] Shropshire servants who perhaps came from places I had not been *ab[illegible]* to visit.

Next, I must mention with gratitude the help I have received fro[illegible] kind friends and correspondents residing in Shropshire, who, thoug[illegible] in many cases personally unknown to me, have yet either mad[illegible] inquiries for me, hunted up obscure bits of local history, discovere[illegible] useful informants among the poor of their several neighbourhoods, o[illegible] sent me valuable and trustworthy notes from their own knowledge[illegible] and who have, in short, helped me in many and various ways. Amon[illegible] them I must especially mention Mr. William Beacall (Shrewsbury) Mr. W. P. Brookes (Much Wenlock), Mr. R. Eddowes Davies (Shrews[illegible] bury), Mr. Robert Gill (late of Hopton, near Hodnet), the Rev. W. A. Leighton, F.L.S., F.R.S., (Shrewsbury), Mr. T. P. Marshall (Marke[illegible] Drayton), Mr. Askew Roberts (Oswestry), and Mr. Hubert Smith F.R.H.S., (Bridgnorth). To all of these, and to many others (especially to several ladies) not mentioned, I owe most hearty thanks. To many of them I was commended by Miss Jackson, and it is no small testimony to the esteem in which she is held, that those who know me only as her friend, have been, I might almost say, even more diligent in their assistance than those with whom I have become acquainted by other means.

To one other most kind, though unknown, friend I must offer special thanks;—viz., to the Rev. W. W. Skeat (Professor of Anglo-Saxon at the University of Cambridge), who in the midst of his various labours has found time to look through the proof-sheets of the *Folk-Lore*, as he did those of the *Word-Book*, and has enriched these pages with valuable notes and corrections, both etymological and otherwise.

With the arrangements for bringing out the book, its publication in parts, and so forth, I had nothing to do. Everything of that kind was fixed before it came into my hands. But the actual composition of the work is entirely mine. Miss Jackson's collection, when it was made over to me, was a bewildering accumulation of memoranda and letters, which though full of valuable material, had not yet undergone the most elementary process of sorting. Miss Jackson had, however, drawn up a list, carefully arranged in proper order, of the heads under which she wished them to be placed; and it is one more proof of her talents that she should have been able from the confused mass before her to sketch

but a plan to which I have found it possible to adhere very closely, even when possessed of much fuller information than she had at that time.

Some things, such as Epitaphs, not strictly pertaining to Folk-lore, are included because they formed part of her original plan, which her successor was far from wishing to disturb.

As every word of the book in its present state comes from the Editor's own brain (except when otherwise specified), the original author must not be held responsible for omissions or insertions, for the use of extraneous matter to illustrate Shropshire superstition, nor for the imperfections of the literary style.

On some of these points I received much good advice from the author of *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties;* but as he has not seen any of the finished MS. or proofs before publication, he is not accountable for the poor use I fear I may have made of his kind hints.

In relating the Legends, I have endeavoured to give them in simple colloquial language, such as a nurse might use to a child, or an old parish clerk to an 'intelligent foreigner.' But in so doing I have usually *omitted the dialect.* Even where I have tried to give the actual words of the narrator, I have as a rule modified the dialect very considerably.[1] First, because the use of any strongly-marked dialect makes a book tiresome to readers who are not interested in that especial subject, and secondly, because I doubt my own ability to reproduce, with sufficient accuracy, more than an occasional word or phrase of any dialect save the softened form of 'Staffordshire,' which is spoken around my own old home. Lovers of 'folk-speech' will, however, find one or two specimens from West and South Shropshire, taken from Miss Jackson's MSS., and one from North-East Shropshire, for which I am myself accountable.

I have been careful—even at the risk of becoming tedious—to note the precise *locale* of each successive scrap, because in a large Border county like Shropshire, containing so many varieties of speech, custom, and so forth, it is impossible to tell what small details may not be found useful in helping to determine ancient boundaries, and to throw light on those questions of race and descent so much debated in the present day.

I have also, as a general rule, given my authority for each separate

[1] *E.g.*, no true Salopian ever sounds the letter *h;* but, this being understood, I do not think it necessary to annoy the general reader by continually indicating the fact. I merely give an occasional reminder of this and many other forms and pronunciations which have already been fully set forth in the *Shropshire Word-Book.*

detail, especially in cases where I met with two or three variant
same legend, and I have even mentioned names when there see
reason why I should not do so. But it is manifestly impossible,
being unbearably tiresome to the reader, to do this in *every* ca
when the matter in question is something of common report in
neighbourhood, it would obviously be absurd to mention one
more than another as the 'authority' for it. In fact, those thi
which no special authority is given are almost always matters
the personal knowledge either of Miss Jackson or myself.

In quoting from other local writers, however, I have been scru
ously careful to name my authority, and when I have made
statement on the faith of a correspondent of *Byegones* or of *Sh*
and Patches,—our local equivalents for *Notes and Queries*, publis
respectively at Oswestry and Shrewsbury,—I have almost always ta
pains to ascertain the name of the writer and his probable means
information.

I have not scrupled to add anything in the way of commentary
comparison which I thought might serve to illustrate the matter
hand. The book is likely to be read by many subscribers interested in
Shropshire but with little previous knowledge of Folk-lore, and for
their sakes I have thought it right to repeat much that is already well
known to Folk-lorists, in order to show the bearing of things which
might otherwise appear trifling and absurd to the general reader.

I have also encumbered my pages with more footnotes and refer-
ences than can be needed by experienced students. But I cannot tell
that my book may not some day fall into the hands of some beginner
in the science like myself, and I have so practical a knowledge of the
difficulty of *finding out how to find out* what one wants to know, that if
my footnotes and references should ever serve to direct such an one to
trustworthy sources of information, I shall feel that it has been quite
worth while to add them for this reason alone.

May I in conclusion be permitted to make a few remarks on Folk-
lore considered as a whole? There can be no doubt, it seems to me,
that its source is to be found in the first crude attempts of mankind to
account for the wonders of Creation. The originators of Folk-lore were
in fact the first natural philosophers. Their many inconsistent theories,
accepted as facts, are the foundation of an unwieldy structure, in which
the history, circumstances, and habits of life of each individual nation
have made continual alterations. The introduction of Christianity has
been the greatest of these later influences: and in modern days the

tudy of the Bible by the poor has had much to do with extinguishing certain phases of Folk-lore and keeping alive others. Fairies and goblins are never named in it, therefore the faith in them is now (if it is not too rash to say so), dying a natural death in England; and the stories formerly told of them, if not forgotten altogether, are now attributed to ghosts, witches, or giants—beings of whom, on the other hand, some mention may be found in Holy Writ.

How such a vast growth of superstitions and customs arose out of (comparatively speaking) a few simple myths, will perhaps never be fully understood, but the best way to arrive at this end is, to my mind, to study the modes of thought of uneducated people at the present day, and to observe what extraordinary mistakes they make about things they do not understand, how quickly a whole fabric of fiction grows up around a single event, and how strangely the same trivial anecdote (generally of a slightly comic kind now-a-days), is attributed in different places to this or that local celebrity. A thorough appreciation of the popular mind of the Present will best teach us to understand the spirit of the Past.

One word more on personal matters. The collection and arrangement of such a vast number of minute details as formed the materials for the present volume, has necessarily taken a considerable time. Private reasons, which need not be further entered upon here, have also helped to cause a delay which must, I fear, have given some annoyance to subscribers; to whom, if so, I beg to offer my apologies. The work is now, however, about to be launched at last,—whether to sink or swim, who can say?

CHARLOTTE S. BURNE.

Pyebirch, Eccleshall, Staffordshire.
March, 1883.

NOTE.

The references to the following works apply to the under-mention editions, *unless otherwise specified.*

GRIMM'S *Deutsche Mythologie*, 2d edition, 1843.

BRAND'S *Popular Antiquities*, ed. by W. Carew Hazlitt, 1870.

HENDERSON'S *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, 2d edition (Fol Lore Society), 1879.

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2d editio 1831.

T. CROFTON CROKER'S *Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*, ed. l Thos. Wright, F.S.A., 1862.

CONTENTS.

'The restless mind of man, ever seeking a reason to account for the marvels presented to his senses, adopts one theory after another, and the rejected explanations encumber the memory of nations as myths, the significance of which has been forgotten.'

BARING-GOULD, *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, 2nd Series, p. 151.

for some reason or other, had a very great spite against the Mayor of Shrewsbury and all his people, and he made up his mind to dam up the Severn, and by that means cause such a flood that the town would be drowned. So off he set, carrying a spadeful of earth, and tramped along mile after mile trying to find the way to Shrewsbury. And how he missed it I cannot tell, but he must have gone wrong somewhere, for at last he got close to Wellington, and by that time he was puffing and blowing under his heavy load, and wishing he was at the end of his journey. By-and-bye there came a cobbler along the road with a sack of old boots and shoes on his back, for he lived at Wellington, and went once a fortnight to Shrewsbury to collect his customers' old boots and shoes, and take them home with him to mend. And the giant called out to him. 'I say,' he said, 'how far is it to Shrewsbury?' 'Shrewsbury!' said the cobbler; 'what do you want at Shrewsbury?' 'Why,' said the giant, 'to fill up the Severn with this lump of earth I've got here. I've an old grudge against the Mayor and the folks at Shrewsbury, and now I mean to drown them out and get rid of them all at once.' 'My word!' thought the cobbler, 'this 'll never do! I can't afford to lose my customers!' and he spoke up again. 'Eh!' he said, 'you'll never get to Shrewsbury, not to-day, *nor* to-morrow. Why, look at me! *I'm* just come from Shrewsbury, and I've had time to wear out all these old boots and shoes on the road since I started.' And he showed him his sack. 'Oh!' said the giant, with a great groan, 'then it's no use! I'm fairly tired out already, and I can't carry this load of mine any farther. I shall just drop it here and go back home.' So he dropped the earth on the ground just where he stood, and scraped his boots on the spade, and off he went home again to Wales, and nobody ever heard anything of him in Shropshire after. But where he put down his load there stands the Wrekin to this day, and even the earth he scraped off his boots was such a pile that it made the little Ercall by the Wrekin's side.

Of this legend the late Thomas Wright, in a paper read before the British Archæological Association at Shrewsbury in 1860,[1] says that, 'it affords another illustration of the manner in which the

[1] Published in *Collectanea Archæologica*, Vol. I. Part 1.

crafty god Thor' [the special opponent of the giants] 'became degraded in the popular imagination, after the passage of the legend through so many ages, into so vulgar a personage as a country cobbler.'

It is a story current among all classes, and told with many variations. Sometimes the giant is said to have intended to bury the town under the spadeful of soil, instead of to dam up the river with it. Sometimes it is the devil himself who cannot bear the sight of Wroxeter church-tower, and the parson of Wroxeter, who becomes aware of his intention to bury it, and goes out with the sack of old boots purposely to prevent him. Sometimes it is the people of Shrewsbury who go out, like the Gibeonites, with old boots and mouldy crusts of bread to deceive their enemy. The story is told, too, of other hills,—of the 'Devil's Spadeful,' near Bewdley in Worcestershire, and also, it is said, of Silbury Hill, near Devizes.

Both the Wrekin legends, like others of the same class, are sometimes told of the devil. An elderly lady, relating the last-mentioned, said to me, 'They generally call it the devil nowadays, *but the older people say it was a giant.*' The mediæval conception of the devil,—the hardworking, easily-cheated fiend who appears in popular stories throwing stones, building, pulling down buildings,—is well-known to have been directly derived from the giants of older mythology.

Further westward than the Wrekin, among the long ridges of moorland, separated by deep narrow valleys, which occupy that side of Shropshire, the Stiperstones rears its long fish-shaped back, crowned by a row of five curious projecting rocks, which from a distance look as if they might be the huge fins of some primæval monster; and which, says the pedestrian Walter White,[1] 'reminded me of certain sloping rock-masses which I had seen on the Riesengebirge.'

It would be interesting to know whether these 'rock-masses' have any legend attached to them at all like that which clings to the 'Devil's Chair,' the highest rock on the Stiperstones, and which has been told me by the country people somewhat in this fashion:—

'Once upon a time the Devil was coming from Ireland with an

[1] *All Round the Wrekin*, p. 67, ed. 1860.

apronful of stones. Where he was going to I cannot say; some say it was the Wrekin he was carrying in his leather apron, some say he was going to fill up Hell Gutter,[1] on the side of the Stiperstones Hill. But any way he had to cross the Stiperstones, and it was a very hot day, and he was very tired, so he sat down to rest on the highest rock. And as he got up again to go on his way, his apron-string broke, and down went the stones, and very badly he cursed them too, so I've heard. There they lie to this day, scattered on the ground all round the Devil's Chair, and if you go up there in hot weather you may smell the brimstone still, as strong as possible!'[2]

But 'old Netherley,' a lame old man who used to 'lug coal' with a cart and two donkeys about the Condover country twenty or thirty years ago, told a different story, as he had learnt it from the miners employed at the lead-mines in the hill-side.

According to him, of all the countries in the world the Devil hates England the most, because we are good Protestants and read the Bible. Now if ever the Stiperstones sink into the earth, England will be ruined. The devil knows this very well, so he goes whenever he can, and sits in his chair on the top of the hill, in hopes that his weight will flatten it down and thrust it back into the earth, but he hasn't managed it yet, and it is to be hoped he never will!

The size and weight here attributed to the devil are lingering traces of his kindred to the ancient giants, and *failure*, too, is a characteristic of all the attempted exploits of both.

Some such legends as the above must once have been told of the Giant's Chair on the Titterstone Clee, but they are now, it is to be feared, entirely forgotten, though the tradition still obtains that there was *a battle of the giants* on the Titterstone, and that the loose stones about its summit are their missiles still lying scattered there.

Lost, too, I fear, are the legends which gave rise to the names of the Devil's Mouth on the Longmynd, where the road between Church Stretton and Ratlinghope passes through a cutting in the

[1] Gutter = ravine, valley. See *Shropshire Word-Book.*

[2] Something the same story is told of some heaps of stones near a bridge built by the devil at Kirby Lonsdale, Westmoreland (*Choice Notes*, p. 4); also of 'Kubby Roo' in Orkney, and of Tregeagle and Looe Pool in Cornwall, etc.

rock, the Devil's Dingle in the neighbourhood of the Wrekin, and the Giant's Shaft (= arrow) at Abdon Burf, on the Brown Clee. This is an overthrown monolith or mênhir, of unhewn stone, over eight feet long, and tapering from two feet four inches square at the base, to one foot eight inches square at the upper end. Once, no doubt, it was the subject of a story, such as that told in Norway of the Jutul (or giant) of Hestmandoe. On Hestmandoe, or Horseman's Isle, in the Nordlands, is a mountain, which was once a giant who loved a maiden of Leköe in Nummedal, twelve miles to the southward. She rejected him, and turned his messengers to stone, so in revenge he bent his bow and let fly an arrow at her, which, however, missed its mark, for its course was impeded by having to pass through the mountain of Torgehat, where the hole it cleft in the rock may still be seen, and it fell at the maiden's feet, where it still lies, a huge long stone. In the end the giant and the maiden, like the messengers, were both turned into stone, and shall so remain, looking on each other till doomsday. But even to this day a Nordlander seldom sails by the spot without taking off his hat to the Maid of Leköe.[1]

'The Giant's Grave' is the name given to a mound on the Shropshire side of Llanymynech Hill, where once was a cromlech, now destroyed. The story goes that a giant buried his wife there, with a golden circlet round her neck, and many a vain attempt has been made by covetous persons to find it, undeterred by the fate which tradition says overtook three brothers, who overturned the capstone of the cromlech, and were visited with sudden death immediately afterwards.[2]

The 'funeral garlands' which some forty years ago still hung in Shrawardine church, were believed by the villagers to be the work of giants. This is particularly curious, as the practice of carrying such garlands at funerals was still kept up in that part of Shropshire less than a hundred years before, so that the belief must have sprung up within two or three generations.

[1] THORPE'S *Northern Mythology*, II. 5.

[2] *Cambrian Register*, vol. I. p. 275. Similar 'giants' graves' abound in Germany, and in Cornwall.

There is a Giant's Well in Hawkstone Park, of which the traditions will be more fitly placed in the following chapter, but there is still another very remarkable legend of giants current in Shropshire, which must be related here.

On the banks of the little river Onny, in the valley between Church Stretton and Ludlow, and not far from the 'Craven Arms' railway station, stands Stokesay Castle, one of the most perfect specimens in existence of a fortified mansion of the early fourteenth century. On either side of it rise fine bold hills shutting in the valley. The easternmost of these is crowned by the large and perfect entrenchments of Norton Camp, and that on the south-west, called Yeo or View Edge, has also earthworks on its summit, both camps having been raised, it is thought, to guard the Roman road which once ran along the bottom of the valley. But these various monuments of antiquity, much as they differ from each other in origin, have all been linked together in popular imagination thus:—

Many years ago, all the country round about Stokesay belonged to two giants, who lived, the one upon View Edge, and the other at Norton Camp. Most likely they were brothers, for the land belonged to them both alike, and so did the money. They kept all their money locked up in a big oak chest in the vaults under Stokesay Castle, and when either of them wanted any of it he just took the key and got some out, and took the key back with him. And then if the other one wanted it, he shouted to his brother on the other side to throw it to him, and then *he* went down and got some; and so they went on, throwing the key backwards and forwards just as they happened to want it. But at last, one day, one of them wanted the key, and the other had got it, so he shouted out to him to throw it over as they were used to do; and he went to throw it, but somehow he made a mistake and threw too short, and dropped the key into the moat down by the castle. They tried every way to find it, but they never did, and there it lies now at the bottom of the pool somewhere. Many have been to look for it, quite of late years even, but it has never been found. And the chest of treasure stands in the vaults still, so they say, but nobody can get into it, for there is a great big raven always sitting on the top of it, and he won't let

anybody try to break it open, so no one will ever be able to get the giant's treasure until the key is found, and many say it never *will* be found, let folks try as much as they please.

Another local legend shows the 'foul fiend' combining some of the attributes of the Wild Huntsman with those of the laborious giants.

On the road between Acton Burnell and Cardington is a stretch of rude pavement, from two to three hundred yards in length, known as the Devil's Causeway. It once formed part of a Roman road leading from Wroxeter to Rushbury, and in the judgment of the Rev. C. H. Hartshorne, the local antiquarian authority, was never more than on an average thirteen feet wide.[1] But in the summer of 1881, a country woman in the immediate neighbourhood was found to declare that the causeway as it at first existed was a quarter of a mile long, and no less than a furlong wide. The devil laid it in a single night, and he haunts the scene of his labours still. If you cross the causeway at midnight you will meet him, in the shape of a black man, with cow's horns and hoofs, riding on a white horse. There is no danger in the meeting to any one with a good conscience, going on a lawful errand. The devil passes by all such persons like a flash of light. But if any man be going on a bad errand, or have lived a careless, godless life, the devil will set upon him, and struggle with him, and leave him half-dead. 'Oh, my faither seed 'im 'imself, wunst,' she said; but the result of the meeting on that occasion was not stated!

How much does Bunyan's account of the battle between Christian and Apollyon owe to popular superstitions such as these?

One very common form of legend shows the devil concerned in directing the building of churches. When Worfield Church (near Bridgnorth) was built, the site originally chosen for it was on the top of a neighbouring hill, but the devil would not allow it to remain there, lest if it were placed in such a conspicuous spot the spire (a rare sight in Shropshire, where towers are usual) should attract too much attention, and draw too many worshippers to the church. So every night he pulled down all that the workmen had built during the day, and carried the stones down to the place where

[1] *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 134.

the church now stands. At last the men got tired of such fruitless labour, and began to build in the spot where the stones were collected, in hopes that they might succeed better, and so it proved, for the devil molested them no longer when they worked on the low ground, and the church was safely completed.

In a low, marshy hollow, near Yorton railway station, between Wem and Shrewsbury, may be seen the ruins of Broughton Church.[1] This, too, was at first placed on high ground, near the present turnpike road to Wem, but every night the work of the builders was mysteriously destroyed, and when this had gone on so long that it could no longer be supposed to be done by mischievous neighbours, the people decided that it must be the work of the devil himself, and that their attempt was useless. So they began again in the valley below, and were no longer interfered with.[2]

The site first chosen for Baschurch Church (north-west of Shrewsbury) was on the top of the Berth Hill. This is a smooth, grassy mound outside the village, crowned by the entrenchments of a British camp, and approached by an ancient causeway leading through marshy meadows beside a deep dark sheet of water called the Berth Pool, of which 'three cart-ropes' will not reach the bottom. But as long as the building was carried on on the Berth Hill, however hard the men worked during the day, 'something,' they knew not what, always pulled their work down again during the night, and threw the stones into the Berth Pool, until at last the disheartened people tried a fresh site, and then their work was allowed to remain.

The same story is told of Stoke-upon-Tern old church, north of Newport (rebuilt 1874). There the stones which were 'drawn'—to use the local expression—to the top of the hill above the village, in readiness for the building, were night after night carried down to the swampy ground beside the river, where the church now stands.[3]

[1] Now rebuilt on a new site.

[2] Mr. Wright mentions *two milk-white oxen* as the agents of the nightly destruction in this case.—*Collectanea Archæologica*, Vol. I. Part 1.

[3] A tradition obtained in Oswestry not many years ago, that the town *had migrated bodily* from its original site at Old Oswestry, a British stronghold on an eminence three quarters of a mile from the present town.

Such stories as these may be found all over England; at Brent Tor and Braunton in Devonshire; at Rochdale, and other places in various counties enumerated in *Choice Notes on Folklore;* besides many not mentioned there. But there is one thing about our Shropshire stories which does not seem to be the case everywhere, namely that the site which cannot be built on is *always on the top of a hill.*

'The people do tell,' said a Dartmoor farmer to Mrs. Bray in 1832, 'that the giants were masters of all the hill country, and had great forests, and set up their *karns* and their great stones, and all they old ancient things about the moor.'[1] And, remembering that giants and devils are in popular superstition practically the same beings, it is pretty clear that the same idea must once have formed part of the popular creed in Shropshire. Moreover, most of the places which were the scenes of the foregoing legends are marked by ancient earthworks which must already have stood there, huge, deserted, and mysterious, as they do now, when the floating legends of the invading Teuton people crystallized about them, in the vain endeavour to explain their origin and use.

'The giants,' says Grimm,[2] 'were imagined as inhabiting rocks and mountains . . . . Stones and rocks are the giants' weapons' [compare the battle on the Titterstone], 'they use only stone clubs, stone shields, no swords . . . . Buildings of olden time, of mysterious structure, which have endured for long centuries, and are such as the present generation no longer erects, the people use to ascribe to giants or to devils[3] . . . . And as ancient military roads

[1] *Traditions of Devon*, Vol. I. p. 99.

[2] *Deutsche Mythologie*, ed. 1843, p. 499, *et seq.*

[3] Mr. Wright, in the paper before referred to, brings evidence to show that this was already the habit of our forefathers when first they came into Britain. He gives the two following descriptions of ruined buildings from 'the valuable collection of Anglo-Saxon poetry known as the *Exeter Book*':—

'eald *enta geweorc*	'The old works of giants
'ídlu stódon.'	'stood desolate.'

And again—

'Wrætlic is þes weal-stán	'Wondrous is this wall-stone,
'wyrde gebræcon	'the fates have broken it,
'burg-stede burston	'have burst the burgh-place,
'brosnaþ *enta geweorc.*'	'the work of giants is perishing.'

were paved with stone, they also were laid to the account of the giants.' [Compare the foregoing story of the Devil's Causeway.]

Some of the stories Grimm relates in the same chapter correspond remarkably with our legends of the Stiperstones and of Stokesay Castle.[1]

For instance: A giant in the island of Rügen was annoyed at having to wade through the sea to reach Pomerania, and determined to build a dam between the island and the Continent, so he put on an apron and filled it with earth, but when he had got as far as Rodenkirchen with his load, he tore a hole in his apron, and the earth which fell from it formed the Nine Mountains at Rambin. He stopped up the hole and went on, but the same thing happened a second time, and by the time he reached his journey's end there was not enough earth left to make the dam, and the poor giant was so vexed that he had a fit of apoplexy and died. Again: Two sister giantesses, Hvenild and Grimild, lived in Zealand. Hvenild carried burdens in her apron to Schonen, and made one journey safely, but the second time she took too heavy a load, so that her apron-string broke in the middle of the water, and the contents of her apron formed the little island called after her, 'Hven.' Other like stories come from Sweden, the Netherlands, &c. In France, the Virgin Mary acts much the same part at Mézières and Charente, and in Greece Pallas Athene, startled by a crow, lets fall a mountain she is carrying to strengthen the Acropolis. Whole villages in Hesse and in Thuringia have been let fall by the devil while carrying them through the air in a basket or apron.

'Often,' says Grimm (p. 510), 'it is related that two giant comrades or neighbours lived and trafficked together in two neighbouring hills, or on both sides of a stream.' He gives many instances of this from different parts of Germany and Scandinavia, of which it will be sufficient to mention two. Between Godelheim and Amelunxen lived two giants, one on the Brunsberg, the other on the Wiltberg, who were in the habit of throwing great keys to each other across the

[1] Compare also the legends of the Giants of St. Michael's Mount (Cornwall) in HUNT, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, Vol. I. pp. 19, 30.

Weser.[1] Two giants lived, the one on the Eberstein, the other at Homburg. They had only one axe between them, with which they used to cleave wood. When the Eberstein giant wanted to go to work, he called to the Homburger, who lived an hour and a half's journey from him, and the latter threw the axe over, and in like manner it was managed when the axe happened to be on the Eberstein side.

So far as my knowledge extends, the enmity of the Continental demons to churches has been shown, not so much by removing them from their sites, like ours (though a story of the kind occurs in Denmark), as by throwing huge rocks to batter them down or bury them.

All over North Germany and Scandinavia the tradition clings to every isolated rock or boulder, that it was thrown by some Troll or giant at a neighbouring church, but missed its mark.[2]

The connection between giants, rocks, and mountains, is not confined to the Teutonic nations. To go no farther than our own island, Wales is full of such giants. Cader Idris is the 'chair' of one of them, and three crags which lie near the road from Dolgelley to Machynlleth are the pebbles he tossed out of his shoe while walking.[3] While in so-called 'classic' story, Polyphemus—dwelling on his mountain, duped, blinded, and fruitlessly throwing stones at his enemy,—is an exact counterpart of our Northern giants, as they appear both in ancient mythology and in the popular tales of the present day.[4]

[1] I have little doubt that in our Shropshire story the river Onny preceded the moat of Stokesay Castle as the place where the giants lost their key.

[2] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, Vol. II. 85, 158; III. 79.

[3] WIRT SIKES, *British Goblins*, p. 371.

[4] See the story of the Giant of Dalton Mill, and Mr. Baring Gould's note on it, in Henderson's *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, ed. 1879, p. 195.

CHAPTER II.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

CONCERNING POPULAR HEROES.

"I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none."

Macbeth, Act I. Sc. VII.

IN the south aisle of Berrington Church, four miles from Shrewsbury, there is a cross-legged effigy, representing some unknown knight of the late 14th or early 15th century. The figure is of wood, not stone, and exhibits the unusual costume of a surcoat worn over plate armour. Altogether, it has excited a good deal of interest among antiquaries. The Rev. W. A. Leighton, visiting the church, asked the parish clerk if he had ever heard whom the figure represented. No, said the man; but the people of the neighbourhood always called him 'Owd Scriven o' Brompton.' The story went, that once upon a time, when Scriven was going from Brompton to visit his lady-love at Eaton Mascott (two hamlets in Berrington parish), just by the stile at the bottom of the 'Banky Piece' he met with a great lion, 'the terror of the neighbourhood.' However, Owd Scriven had brought his great sword with him, and he attacked the lion, 'and a terrible tussle it must have been;' but in the end the man overcame the beast, and cut him in two. And, quoth the clerk, you may see a lion, cut in half just the same, lying under the feet of the image, and on the man's face you may see where the lion gave Owd Scriven a terrible scratch with his fore-paw, and tore away half his cheek.[1]

[1] *Transactions of the Shropshire Archæological Society*, Vol. III. p. 149. Mr. Leighton adds, 'There was a family of Scriven of Frodesley, but I never heard

So far as I have been able to ascertain, this curious story is the only Salopian legend in which the beneficent, monster-slaying type of hero makes his appearance. Our heroes, whether half-real or entirely mythical, have generally been objects rather of fear than of admiration or love.

Let us now turn our steps southwards, to Wenlock Edge, a long ridge of limestone which runs diagonally across the southern half of the county for more than twelve miles in a south-westerly direction from the Severn, and takes its name from the quaint little old town of Much Wenlock nestling in the valley near its upper end. On the southern side it rises gently in a smooth grassy slope, but northwards it breaks off suddenly in a sheer perpendicular escarpment, only passable in a very few places by steep—even zig-zagged—roads, and forming a natural barrier, which cuts off the fair wide valley of Apedale on the north, from the no less lonely and beautiful Corve Dale on the south. Tradition relates that one Major Smallman of Wilderhope, in the time of the Rebellion, leaped his horse over this precipice, at a spot where it is at the steepest, rather than surrender to a party of Roundhead soldiers by whom he was hotly pursued. The horse was killed, but he marvellously escaped unhurt. It is said that he alighted on a crab tree still to be seen growing out of the rock, clambered down, and made his way safely along the foot of the Edge to his charming old mansion of Wilderhope, now, alas! degraded into a farmhouse. The scene of his adventure is still pointed out by the name of 'the Major's Leap.'[1]

Farther south, between Presthope and Lutwyche Hall, the cliff is connected with the story of a more mythical hero, 'Ippikin,' who has left his name to a remarkably bold and picturesque rock jutting out from the Edge just above 'Upper Hill' farm. Ippikin was a famous robber-knight of days gone by, who inhabited a cave at the base of this crag, concealed among the trees and brushwood which

that they had any connection with Berrington. On the outside of the east end of this south aisle is a headstone to a Scriven of Brompton, 1726, and the country people may have connected the two, and so given rise to the legend.'

[1] The place is just above Blakeway Farm, between Hughley and Harley. The exact depth of the precipice at this spot has never been ascertained, but the summit of the Edge is 800 feet above the level of the sea.

clothe the face of the cliff wherever they can find a footing. There he and his followers lived unharmed for many years, and gathered together great quantities of stolen treasure. At last a mass of overhanging rock fell, and blocked up the mouth of the cave, imprisoning the robber band for ever. But Ippikin's Rock is a haunted place still. The mark of the knight's gold chain may yet be traced upon it, and if any one shall be so hardy as to stand on the top of the cliff and cry,

'Ippikin! Ippikin!
Keep away with your long chin!"

the ghost of the imprisoned robber will instantly appear, with the gold chain still about his neck, and with one blow sweep the insulting speaker over the precipice, to be dashed to pieces by the fall. Quite recently rumours were current of moving lights seen about the cave by night, showing that the robbers were still on the watch to guard their hidden treasure.

Such is the story, as gathered in 1881 from two independent local informants, though how the manner of Ippikin's death is reconciled with the fact that the mouth of the cave is still open, it is hard to say. One authority varied the tale by saying that he (whom she described as 'a very gay gentleman') fell over the cliff as he was riding home tipsy from Wenlock one dark night—an ignoble fate for so romantic a personage!

Is it too much to suggest that behind the characters of gentleman-highwayman and outlaw-knight, which Ippikin has evidently borne by turns in the imagination of different ages, we may discover in his malevolent nature, his long chin, and his curious diminutive name, some resemblance to the malicious dwarfs who guard untold riches in the recesses of the Harz mountains?

On the steepest side of Nesscliff Hill, overlooking the high-road from Oswestry to Shrewsbury, is a large cave in the face of the rock, approached by a flight of steps, and divided into two rooms by a pillar or half-wall of rock, on which is cut the inscription, 'H. K., 1564.' It is well known in all the neighbourhood as 'Kynaston's Cave,' once the dwelling of 'Wild Humphrey Kynaston,' a veritable high-born outlaw of Henry VII.'s time, who is still remembered by

the poor as 'a very clever man called *Kinnyson*, who robbed the rich to give to the poor, and sold himself to the devil.' He had, so they tell, a wonderful horse, which was always shod backwards, so that no one might be able to track him, and which was, according to some, the devil himself in the shape of a horse. Mounted on this uncanny steed, Kynaston one day, 'when they were after him to take him,' leaped from the top of Nesscliff Hill to Ellesmere, a distance of at least nine miles. Others say the leap was from Nesscliff to Loton Park, five miles in a straight line, and from thence to the top of the Breidden Hill; but any way 'they say the devil helped him to do it, and they show the place where he leaped from, on the top of the hill, and there are the bones of the horse kept in the cave now.'

'And surely,' wound up the daughter of a neighbouring national schoolmaster, 'the *old lad* must a bin in him, or else he never could adone it.'

Many declare that the hoof-marks of the famous steed are still to be seen—somewhere! But no two authorities agree *where*. Mr. Wright says that they are pointed out on a stone on the bank of the Severn, at a place known as 'Kynaston's Leap,' where the river is forty feet wide, and where, according to some, the freebooter and his horse leapt over it. This version of the story comes nearer to the not-impossible one in vogue in the seventeenth century, which is thus preserved in an old local work, Gough's *History of Myddle*, published in the year 1700:—

'Sir Roger Kinaston, of *Hordley*, was, by comission, made Castle Keeper of Middle Castle and Knocking. After his decease his younger son, Humphry Kinaston (who for his dissolute and ryotous liveing was called the wild Humphry), was tenant of this castle. Hee had two wives, but both of soe meane birth, that they could not lay claime to any Coat of Armes, as appeares by the card of Kinaston's Armes, which Mr. Edward Kinaston of Oateley, shewed mee not long before his death. I have not heard of any children which wild Humphry had, but I have heard of much debt that hee had contracted; and beeing outlawed in debt, he left Myddle Castle (which hee had suffered to grow ruinous, for want of repaire), and went and sheltered himself in a Cave neare to Nescliffe; which, to

this day, is called Kinaston's Cave, and of him the people tell almost as many romantick storyes, as of the great outlawe Robin Whood. Yet one thing I must remember that on a time when hee was gott over Monford's Bridge, and was on that side Severne which is next Shrewsbury, and must needs returne over that bridge, the under shiriffe came with a considerable company of men to the bridge (which then was made with stone pillars and wooden planks), and haveing taken up severall plankes, and made such a breadth as they thought noe horse was able to leape over, they laid themselves in ambush; and when wild Humphry returned, and was about to enter upon the bridge, they rose up to apprehend him, which he perceiving, put spurrs to his horse, and rideing full speed, leaped clearely over the breadth. The measure of this leape was afterwards marked out upon Knockin Heath, upon a greene plott by the way-side that leads from Knockin towards Nescliffe, with an H and a K cut in the ground att the ends of the leape. The letters were about an elne long, and were a spade graff broad and a spade graff deep. These letters were usually repaired yearely by Mr. Kinaston, of Ruyton. I confesse I have seen the letters, but did not take the measure of the distance.[1] After wild Humphry's time, this castle [Myddle] was never inhabited, but went utterly to ruine.'

Little besides the few particulars already given is told of Wild Humphrey now-a-days, but local writers have preserved several other details which were formerly current. One day, it was said, he rode into the courtyard of Aston Hall, a neighbouring mansion belonging to the Lloyd family, and coolly demanded refreshment. Ale was brought to him, which he drank without dismounting. Meantime the gates were closed, and preparations made to seize the audacious robber, as it were in a trap. But he, quietly finishing his draught, put the silver tankard into his pocket, and spurring his horse, leaped over serving-men, gates, and all, and so made off unharmed. The horse, his faithful comrade, grazed at will in the neighbouring fields, returning always from any distance at the sound of his master's

[1] The Editor of *Byegones* (the antiquarian serial published at Oswestry) remarks that, 'if this be true, there must have been a constant renewing of the letters on the turf for nearly two centuries.'

whistle. At night he was stabled in the outer division of the roomy cave. Every Sunday Humphrey's mother used to come over from Ruyton to bring him his dinner! On that day only, it seems, she could do so without endangering his safety.

Wild Humphrey was very good to the poor, and could not bear any injustice. If he met two carts on the road, one with three horses, the other with one, he would take off the leader from the first, and fasten it in front of the single horse, so as to make both equal! The poor people loved him and were grateful for his bounty. In return for his benefits they used to go and cook his meals for him, and take provender to the horse; and it was no doubt partly owing to their friendship, as well as to the talents of himself and his horse, that he escaped every attempt that was made to capture him, and at last died peacefully in his cave.[1]

Such is the traditional portrait of our outlaw. There is, as is so often the case, a grain of historical truth in the story.

The robber's father, Sir Roger Kynaston of Hordley, keeper of Knockin and Middle Castles, married for his second wife Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Grey, Earl of Tankerville and Baron Grey of Powis. Both Grey and Kynaston were strong partisans of the house of York, as indeed were the majority of the people of the Welsh marches. At the battle of Blore Heath, the Lancastrian commander (James Lord Audley of Red Castle, another Salopian) fell by the hand of Roger Kynaston, and he and Grey were both among those who compounded for their lives by the forfeiture of their estates during the temporary triumph of the Lancastrian cause in 1460.

Humphrey Kynaston, son of Sir Roger by Elizabeth Grey, was outlawed in 1491, the year when Perkin Warbeck first came forward as a pretender to the throne; and in this connection it should be remembered that the little Duke of York, whom Warbeck personated, was born at Shrewsbury, and that his claims to the crown would probably seem specially strong in the eyes of Salopian Yorkists. Two years later, Humphrey Kynaston received his pardon, but it is

[1] AUTHORITIES: NIGHTINGALE'S *Shropshire*, in *Beauties of England and Wales*, pp. 278, 279. GREGORY'S *Shropshire Gazetteer*, 1824. *Shreds and Patches*, Vol. II. p. 225.

not proved whether debt or politics had led to his outlawry. It is certain that he was in money difficulties, for he and his mother appear in the Corporation books of Shrewsbury as giving a joint bond for the sum of twenty pounds borrowed by them.[1] His will is said to bear the date of 1534. If this be so, the date in the cave (1564) is doubtless inaccurate.

Three hundred years before Wild Humphrey's time, another daring outlaw lived in the very same corner of the county; namely Fulk Fitz Warine, the son of one and the grandson of another Fulk Fitz Warine of Whittington Castle, who in the time of King John was ejected from his inheritance of Whittington, and thereafter lived the life of a freebooter, robbing the king's merchants, among other things, in the forest of Bradene, by which, as I take it, is meant the Breidden Hills. At length he laid wait for his supplanter at Whittington, Moris Fitz Roger de Powis, at the foot of Nesscliff Hill, as he went towards Shrewsbury Castle, and slew him in fair

[1] OWEN AND BLAKEWAY, *History of Shrewsbury*, Vol. I. pp. 227, 229. Also *Byegones* for June, 1880, p. 64. Humphrey Kynaston irresistibly reminds one of Tom Faggus, the Exmoor highwayman, whose 'enchanted strawberry horse' came at the sound of his master's whistle, and saved him from all dangers: more especially once, when Barnstaple Bridge was beset at both ends by officers of the law, and the horse and his rider leaped over the parapet and escaped by swimming down the river. A similar character is Peter Muggel of Schwienkuhlen (which his widow sold to the Convent of Arensbok in 1470), who was a robber in the days when Hamburg and Lubeck were powerful cities. Soldiers were sent against him and destroyed his castle, but he had previously ridden away on his white horse and established himself and his treasure in a cave, where soon after, by the aid of the Evil One, he buried them under a flat stone. The Lübeckers were in pursuit of him, so he had his horse's shoes reversed, which deceived them for a time, but they went to search his cave for treasure, found him sleeping, and stabbed him. Since that time he hunts at night through the village of Gieselrade on his three-legged white horse, which he swims across a large pond, and then returns to his hiding-place. It is very dangerous to meet him. See THORPE, *Yule Tide Stories*, pp. 479, 500, 502.

Legends of hoof-marks imprinted by supernatural agency are very common. There is a hollow called the Devil's Footstep at the mouth of the Ogo Hole in Llanymynech Hill. See *infra*, ch. vii. In the east of Cornwall all peculiar marks on rocks are attributed to King Arthur; in western Cornwall, on the contrary, they are referred to giants or devils. See HUNT, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, I. 204. Thus myths of fiends and giants and even deities become attached to the names of popular heroes, even of those who lived in historical and almost modern days, like Peter Muggel and Wild Humphrey Kynaston.

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[1] AUTHORITIE[illegible] *Wales*, pp. 27[illegible] *Patches*, Vol. II

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[1] Owen and [illegible] Also [illegible] one of [illegible] [illegible] crest by the Shropshire families of [illegible] How of Shrewsbury. See *Shrop-* [illegible] Kittermaster.

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fight, after which misdemeanour, Fulk was constrained to carry his sword over to Llewellyn of Wales, who was ready enough to befriend a disaffected March-man. But King John and his men came in force against Llewellyn, and though for a short time Fulk was restored to Whittington, the prince presently made peace with the king of England, and Fulk judged it expedient to go beyond seas, where he 'assayed marvels' enough to fill a volume; till at last he returned to England, and fell upon the king as he was hunting in the New Forest, carried him captive on board ship, and forced him to restore his lands and reverse his outlawry. So Fulk returned to Whittington in peace, and had the king's peace all the days of his life, and was buried at last in the New Abbey at Alberbury by Severn side, which he had founded.

All this and much more both of fact and fiction is told in the Norman-French romance which records our hero's deeds,[1] and which, in spite of its inaccuracies and impossibilities, presents so vivid a picture of life on the Welsh Marches in the thirteenth century that, had space permitted, I would gladly have given a fuller account of it here. The name of Fulk Fitz Warine, however, has utterly vanished from the popular traditions. Still, the dim remembrance of an earlier outlaw, who also rode with horse-shoes reversed and fell upon his enemies under Nesscliff Hill, may perhaps have led to the importation into the legend of Wild Humphrey, of places with which the Kynastons had nothing to do—such as the Breidden Hills and Loton Park, the present 'great house' of Alberbury, which was the Fitz Warines' earliest Shropshire home.[2]

Nesscliff seems to have been the haunt of outlaws and highwaymen from time immemorial. It overlooks the high road from Shrewsbury to Oswestry, along which the Shrewsbury drapers had

[1] *The History of Fulk Fitz Warine*, ed. for the Warton Club by Thomas Wright, F.S.A., 1855.

[2] The same temper of recklessness and daring, and even the same proneness to wild feats of horsemanship, which distinguished Fulk Fitz Warine in the 13th and Humphrey Kynaston in the 16th centuries reappears in the very same corner of the county in our own century; in 'Jack Mytton,' the famous 'Squire of Halston,' of whom so many tales are told. Had Sir Walter Scott lived on the Welsh Marches, what would he not have made of these turbulent spirits of the Border!

to pass to attend the Welsh flannel market at Oswestry. The journey was, as may be supposed, a dangerous one, and in 1583 the Drapers' Company 'ordered that no draper set out for Oswestry on Monday before six o'clock, on forfeiture of 6*s.* 8*d.*, and that they should wear their weapons all the way, and go in company.'

Near Nesscliff is a farmhouse, formerly the Wolf's Head Inn, which a hundred years ago was a noted rendezvous for thieves and highwaymen. It probably took its name from the crest of some neighbouring family, but it is curious that such a place, in such a position, should have been known by the old English cognomen of an outlaw.[1]

Of the Prince of outlaws, our national hero, Robin Hood, we have one local legend :—

In the Old Field near Ludlow are some tumuli, one of which is called 'Robin Hood's Butts.' On this, tradition says, the famous archer stood and shot an arrow from his mighty bow at the weather-cock on Ludlow Church-steeple. But his aim was not so true as usual, and the arrow fell short and stuck in the roof of the northern chancel aisle, where it still remains. The arrow is really a great iron one, set on the ridge of the roof to mark that this was the 'Fletcher's Chancel'—the meeting-place or chantry chapel of the Ludlow arrow-makers.[2]

It has been well said that 'Robin Hood was the darling of the commons, while King Arthur was the hero of the nobles.' But King Arthur was to some extent the hero of the commons also. 'The common sort ascribe whatever is ancient or strange to King Arthur's glory,' says Camden, and further tells us that—

'Scarce a mile off [Red Castle, in Hawkstone Park, Shropshire] is a spot of ground where a small city once stood, the very ruins of

[1] The Wolf's Head has been borne as a crest by the Shropshire families of Peshall of Chetwynd, Clive of the Styche, and How of Shrewsbury. See *Shropshire Arms and Lineages*, by the Rev. F. W. Kittermaster.

[2] My principal Ludlow informant could not tell this story when enquired of in 1881, but it was related to Professor Skeat in the town, some thirty years ago, and Mr. Wright also gives it (*Essays on the Middle Ages*, Vol. II. 209), with the remark that the outlaw in this story plays the part of the mischievous dwarfs of northern folk tales.

Some tumuli on the Longmynd are also called 'Robin Hood's Butts.'

which are now extinct; but the Roman coyns that are found there, with such bricks as they us'd in building, are evidence of its antiquity and founders. The people of the neighbourhood call it Bury, from Burgh, and they affirm it to have been *very famous in King Arthur's days.*'

There is at least one old lady still living who can remember that in her youth, which was spent in the immediate neighbourhood, it was a matter of common report that King Arthur kept his court in the Bury Walls, as the camp is now called, and fought with the giants who lived at the Red Castle in Hawkstone Park, where the Giants' Well is yet to be seen among the ruins. Bishop Heber, who was Rector of Hodnet (the mother parish of Weston-under-Red-Castle) from 1808 to 1823, no doubt alludes to this belief when he says in the notes to his *Morte d'Arthur*, that 'traditionary traces of King Arthur, of the loves of his queen Guenever and Sir Lancelot, with the adventures of the knights of the Round Table, are still to be found in Wales and *parts of Shropshire.*'

In Heber's day there lived at the Hermitage Farm, close by the Bury Walls, a quaint old couple whom he often visited. They possessed a mutilated and highly-prized copy of Sir Thomas Mallory's *History of the most renowned Prince Arthur*, the identical copy, we may suspect, whence Heber drew the materials for his poem. This book no doubt served them to add details to the vague traditions of the place; but be this as it may, they were in the constant habit of entertaining their parson and other visitors with localized stories of Arthur and his knights. Among the giants of the Red Castle, said they, were Tarquin and Tarquinius, whom Lancelot slew, and then (in the words of the well-known ballad which tells the story of the fight)

> "From prison threescore knights and four
> Delivered every one."

The farmer and his wife (would that our authority[1] had recorded

[1] *Some Account of the Antiquities of Hawkstone*, written (anonymously) by Miss Jane Hill, sister of General Lord Hill of Peninsular fame, and privately printed by J. Eddowes at Shrewsbury, about 1830, but without date. The Hills of Hawkstone purchased the Red Castle in 1737.

their names!) pointed out the brook which ran with gore for three days and three nights after this deadly encounter, the bank on which the distressed damsel sat to watch the fight, and the spot where grew the tree on which hung the copper bason which adventurous knights used to smite three times with a spear, to summon the knights to come forth and do battle; and in the Giants' Well, they said, these luckless warriors were imprisoned until Lancelot, having slain Tarquin, set them free. Further, they showed an entrenched eminence in a field near Weston Church, called the Killyards (but known as the Mount Field, 1882) as the spot where Lancelot slew Sir Carados, the gigantic brother of Tarquin, as he was riding homewards, carrying Sir Gawaine bound hand and foot and thrown across his horse behind him.[1] And finally, a cliff in Hawkstone Park, called the 'Raven's Shelf,' was pointed out as the abode of the 'Lady of the Roche,' who was deprived of 'a Baroney of lands' by Sir Hue and Sir Edward 'of the Reed Castle,' whom Sir Ewaine slew in the Lady's cause.

The Bury Walls, fondly fancied to have been the scene of Arthur's Court, is a triple entrenchment with four gateways, enclosing about twenty acres of ground. The Red Castle, the supposed home of the Giants, was built in 1232 by Henry de Audley, the founder of the famous family of that name. The Giants' Well is in one of the towers, which is still standing. It is ten feet in diameter, and is cut through the solid rock to the depth of 105 feet at least —how much deeper, the accumulated rubbish makes it impossible to ascertain. This was once cleared away, in the year 1780, and as 'no water was found, nor any aperture through which it was likely to have entered,' the object of this remarkable excavation seems doubtful.

During the wars of the Roses, the castle was still habitable, but in 1497 James Lord Audley was executed for rebellion, and his

[1] Lancashire tradition says that Lancelot was brought up under Martinmere in that county, and that Tarquin lived at Castlefields near Manchester. A local ballad tells how, in the midst of the fight between them, Tarquin's fury was redoubled by finding that Lancelot was the slayer of his brother, Sir Carados, 'who lived *near Shrewsbury's fair town.*' Roby's *Traditions of England*, 1844. Lancashire Series, Vol. I. pp. 25, 26.

estates were confiscated. His son was reinstated in 1534; yet Leland, writing about that date, says of Red Castle, 'It hath bene strong, but hath decayid many a day.' And then this 'building of olden time,' being 'such as the present generation no longer erects,' was ascribed to the giants—the implacable foes of the glorious king whose name was no doubt already associated with the Roman camp of Bury Walls.

CHAPTER III.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS.

WILD EDRIC.

"Said the son unto the father, 'There are horsemen on the wold!
Mounted warriors, riding chargers, trembling, snorting, grey, and cold,
Keeping rank they come, close marching, six by six and three by three,
Lances gleaming, banners streaming, in the death-wind floating free.
Over hill and vale nine stone-casts, stretches forth the gallant train,
'Tis King Arthur with his army! 'tis King Arthur come again!'
—'If 'tis Arthur, follow, follow! take each man his bow and spear!'
'Forward! follow!' rang the war-cry, o'er the mountains far and near."
Chants Populaires de la Bretagne" (tr. C.S.B.).

IT will be necessary to trespass a good deal upon the domains of history in order to do full justice to the legend of a 'popular hero' so little known, and so important, that he demands a chapter to himself. The name of Hereward le Wake, the patriot of the Isle of Ely in the days of the Conqueror, is sufficiently famous, but that of his contemporary Edric Silvaticus, Salvage, or the Wild, the leader of revolt on the Welsh borders, has not been celebrated in romance, and is consequently comparatively forgotten. Yet his exploits make a much larger figure in trustworthy history than the somewhat shadowy doings of Hereward.

'Wild Edric,' to give him the name which Salopian tradition assigns to him, was nephew to Eadric Streona, the infamous Ealdorman of the Mercians under Ethelred the Unready, and was himself the owner of considerable estates in Shropshire and Herefordshire.[1]

[1] In *Domesday Book* he appears under the name of Edric Salvage, as having held in Shropshire the manors of Hope Bowdler, Weston-under-Red-Castle, and (with another) Middleton, in the days of Edward the Confessor. He is certainly

Very early in the Conqueror's reign, in August, 1067, when his sovereignty over more than half the shires was in reality only nominal, we find Wild Edric already in arms against him. Hereford was one of the few counties which had then been subdued, owing no doubt to the presence of the Norman Richard Fitz Scrob and his followers, whose fortress of Richard's Castle, near Ludlow, the first building of the kind in England, had already provoked the indignation of his English neighbours in the days of the Confessor.

Richard and his men, aided by the garrison of Hereford, continually harried Eadric's land, because he refused to submit to the new king. Eadric therefore allied himself with the two Welsh kings Bleddyn and Rhiwallon, both of whom had been followers of Harold in former times. These three with their forces harried Hereford as far as the river Lugg, and after remaining long enough to reduce the garrison of Hereford to great distress, they returned home laden with enormous booty.

Two years afterwards, when the greater part of England had submitted, we find Eadric still independent. In the great rising of 1069, when almost every shire took up arms, Shrewsbury, which had been garrisoned by the Conqueror, was besieged by the united forces of Bleddyn of Wales (now sole king), and the men of Cheshire,—a shire still untouched by the Norman invaders,—'to whom the inhabitants of the town, with Edric Guilda, a powerful and warlike man, were auxiliaries.'[1] By tremendous exertions on the part of the Conqueror these various risings were at length put down, and in the following year, 1070, (probably soon after the departure of that Danish fleet which had been the support of the revolt in the north),

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the person meant by 'Edric,' who at the same time had owned Chelmarsh, Walton Savage, Eudon George, Overton, and Rudge—in all of which manors he was succeeded by under-tenants of Ralph Mortimer. There is also presumptive evidence that he was the 'Edric, a freeman,' who had held Bayston, Pitchford, Cantlop, Adderley, and 'Elmundewic.' But there was at least one other tenant-in-chief named Edric in Shropshire in the time of King Edward, and it is impossible in all cases to distinguish between them. In his five Herefordshire manors—as well as those in Shropshire already mentioned—he was succeeded by Ralph Mortimer of Wigmore Castle. Nowhere was he succeeded by any who can with any probability be set down as his children.

[1] ORDERICUS VITALIS, 514 A. (quoted by FREEMAN, *Norman Conquest*).

Eadric, that 'vir strenuissimus,' as the chronicler Simeon of Durham calls him, *made peace* with the king. It is nowhere said that he *submitted.*

Only the Isle of Ely still held out, and this last isolated stronghold was broken up in the following year. Little by little the old landmarks were done away, the old earldoms abolished. The Norman was master of the land.

Two years later Eadric appears among the personal followers of William in his expedition against the Scotch in the autumn of 1072—an arrangement probably intended to keep the wild Marchman safely under the king's own eye. And this is the last that authentic history has to say of our Border champion, save the negative evidence of Domesday, that all his lands passed into the hands of Normans, most of them into those of Ralph Mortimer of Wigmore. There is, however, in the *Monasticon* a quotation from the family chronicler of the House of Mortimer, which mentions Eadric, but with so many glaring mistakes of detail that it is hard to decide whether there can be any foundation for any part of the account it gives of him. The historian of Shropshire, Mr. Eyton, says, 'All that I venture to conclude [from it] is, that some time between 1072 and 1085, Edric Sylvaticus forsook his allegiance to King William; that William fitz Osbern, Earl of Hereford, being dead, Mortimer was appointed by the king to reduce Edric; that Mortimer succeeded in so doing, and obtained many of the forfeited estates of Edric as a reward for this service; but that he became Lord of Wigmore [which was built by William fitz Osbern,—not, as the chronicler declares, as the conqueror of Edric, to whom it never belonged—but] as the king's principal lieutenant in Herefordshire after the forfeiture of Earl Roger de Britolio [son of William fitz Osbern] in 1074. The fate of Edric Sylvaticus is unchronicled, for the words of the Mortimer annalist, which point to death in prison, can only be taken as indicating the writer's ignorance of any specific fact.'[1]

[1] EYTON, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, Vol. III. pp. 49, 50. FREEMAN, *Norman Conquest*, Vol. IV. pp. 21, 64, 274, 463, 514, 739. SIR H. ELLIS, *Introduction to Domesday*, Vol. II. p. 87. *Domesday Book*, fol. 183*b*, 256, 256*b*, 258*b*.

Most likely some mystery hung over his end. For it is not many years since, in the West Shropshire hills, in the very neighbourhood where Edric's estates lay, and where also lay the greater number of the very few Shropshire manors retained after the Conquest by Englishmen (no doubt Edric's old friends and comrades, perhaps his kindred), there were people to be found, if there are not some now, who believed Wild Edric to be still alive, imprisoned in the mines of that wild west country. He cannot die, they say, till all the wrong has been made right, and England has returned to the same state as it was in before the troubles of his days.[1] Meantime he is condemned to inhabit the lead-mines as a punishment for having allowed himself to be deceived by the Conqueror's fair words into submitting to him. So there he dwells with his wife and his whole train. The miners call them the 'Old Men,' and sometimes hear them knocking, and wherever they knock, the best lodes are to be found.[2] Now and then they are permitted to show themselves. Whenever war is going to break out, they ride over the hills in the direction of the enemy's country, and if they appear, it is a sign that the war will be serious.

Such, in substance, was the account given some years ago by a young woman from Rorrington[3] to her mistress, who repeated it to me. The lady, wishing to draw out the girl's knowledge, professed not to understand whom she meant by the 'Cong-kerry,' as she called him. 'What! did you never hear of the Cong-kerry, ma'am?' exclaimed the maid, who, by the way, could neither read nor write. 'Why, he used to hang up men by the heels because they were English! Oh, he was a bad man!'

She declared that she had herself seen Wild Edric and his men. It was in 1853 or 1854, just before the Crimean war broke out. She was with her father, a miner, at Minsterley, and she heard the blast of a horn. Her father bade her cover her face, all but her eyes,

[1] Does not this remind one at once of the constant petition of the Middle Ages for a restoration of 'the good laws of King Edward the Confessor'?

[2] These are the 'Knockers' of the Cornish mines. See HUNT, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, II. 118.

[3] A hamlet among the hills, in the far west of the county. The adjoining hamlet of Middleton formed part of Eadric's estates.

and on no account speak, lest she should go mad. Then they all came by; Wild Edric himself on a white horse at the head of the band, and the Lady Godda his wife, riding at full speed over the hills. Edric had short dark curly hair and very bright black eyes. He wore a green cap and white feather, a short green coat and cloak, a horn and a short sword hanging from his golden belt, 'and something zig-zagged here' (touching her leg below the knee). The lady had wavy golden hair falling loosely to her waist, and round her forehead a band of white linen, with a golden ornament in it. The rest of her dress was green, and she had a short dagger at her waist. The girl watched them pass out of sight over the hills towards the north. It was the second time her father had seen them. The former time they were going southwards. 'And then Napoleon Bonaparte came.'

'Many people say,' added our authority, 'that the miners always do seem to know when a war is going to be desperate!'

Flocks of wildfowl and storms of wind are generally considered to account for stories of the passing of the Wild Huntsman; but what an extraordinary imagination it must have been which suggested all these elaborate details!

I never succeeded in getting a second version of this curious story, and the woman who told it could not be traced. But its points of likeness to other such legends, and also its variations from them, are too remarkable to leave room for any doubt of its being a genuine piece of folk-tradition.

The name given to Edric's wife, the 'Lady Godda,'[1] curiously coincides with that of Frau Gauden or Gode, the huntress of whom Mecklenburg tradition tells that her impious words, 'The chase is better than heaven,' doomed her to follow it to all eternity.[2]

It is always dangerous to meet the Wild Hunt. Either death, madness, or blindness may be the consequence. In German tales, the common precaution is to throw oneself face downwards on the ground; in ours, the girl was desired to cover her face with her

[1] There is no evidence to show whether this was her real name or not. Another myth in which she figures will be found in chapter vii.

[2] GRIMM, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 877.

shawl, and not to speak. In all the stories of Hackelberg, the Wild Huntsman of Westphalia and Saxony, death overtakes those who address him or mock his hunting cry.[1] And we all know that a ghost can do no harm unless the ghost-seer speaks to it.

The coming of Edric and his train was heralded by the sound of a horn. Now when Thomas the Rhymer led the horse-dealer to the recesses under the Eildon hills, and showed him the multitude of men and horses wrapped in magic sleep in long rows of underground stalls awaiting the battle of Sheriff Moor, he showed him also a horn and a sword. Whoever should blow the one and draw the other, would break the spell which held them motionless.[2]

Indeed, though there may be some points of likeness between the vision of Wild Edric and that of the Wild Hunt, our legend is far more closely akin to another grand myth, that of the Enchanted Heroes, such as the Rhymer's army, and as those many champions —the great Karl, Frederick 'Barbarossa,' Holger Danske, the Nibelungs, the Three Confederates of Switzerland—who slumber in the hills and caves of kindred lands of the Continent, ready to awaken in the hour of their country's utmost need.[3]

Often, too, is it told of kings who have fallen in battle, 'He is not dead; he will return.' So it was said of Harold after Hastings, of Olaf Tryggvason, of Sebastian of Portugal, of Roderick 'the last of the Goths.' Every conquered nation too (and the English, in Wild Edric's day, were a conquered nation) has its dream of a Golden Age under some famous ruler, who will one day come again and bring back the good old times. Irish, Servians, Mexicans, Moors,—all look for their own beloved champion;[4] and who does not know that King Arthur will return?

The Bretons, the exiled descendants of his people (if indeed he ever lived, or ever had a people!), believe that he leads them on to

[1] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, Vol. III. p. 92.

[2] SIR W. SCOTT, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 133. What has become of Wild Edric's sword, we shall see in chapter viii.

[3] GRIMM, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 905, *et seq.*

[4] KENNEDY, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, p. 173. See also CROFTON CROKER, *Irish Fairy Legends*, ed. T. Wright, pp. 477, 485, and a very complete account of the various heroes in *The Waiting Nations* (*Monthly Packet*, 3rd Series, Vol. I. pp. 81, 127).

battle even now. And 'whenever a war is threatening, there may be seen, as a prophetic sign, the army of Arthur defiling over the tops of the dark mountains at the break of day,'[1] just as did Edric and his men over the Shropshire hills.

But there is one remarkable difference between the history of Wild Edric and those of other champions of the oppressed. They all died in fair fight at the head of their men, striving manfully to the last. Edric gave up the struggle and "made peace." Accordingly, while they are rapt away into some quiet and peaceful resting-place until better times, his prolonged life, we find, is not given him as a blessing, but as a doom. When the good old days come again, his lot will be, not to reign in triumph, but to die in peace.

Over and over again in popular tales is it found that the deeds and attributes of the gods of one age are repeated in the heroes and demigods of another, and thus it is no surprise to us to learn that this myth of the spell-bound hero who shall return, bringing victory, is but a reminiscence of the doings of the supreme god of our heathen forefathers[2]—Woden, the victory-bringer, the war-god, riding his grey horse at the head of his Einherjar or chosen warriors, the spirits of the brave who have fallen in battle, and whom he leads sometimes to the battle-field of their living friends, sometimes to the chase of the wild boar Sæhrímnir, which each day is slain and each morrow revives to afford them a fresh hunt, a fresh capture, a fresh feast.

The madness which was to be the consequence of addressing Wild Edric's band is a mark of their once-divine character. In all ages and countries insanity has been thought to be a token of intercourse with the gods; sometimes sent in anger (*quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat*), but more often as a mark of divine favour, so that the poor lunatic's utterances have been regarded in the light of prophecies and treated with respect. And Woden's own name,[3] be it remembered, signifies the Madman, the 'wud,' raging

[1] VILLEMARQUÉ, *Chants Populaires de la Bretagne*, 4th ed., Vol. I.

[2] KELLY, *Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition*, chap. x.

[3] Properly *Wóden*, from A.S. *wód*, mad; see *Wednesday* in SKEAT, *Concise Etym. Dict.*, p. 556.

deity. He is in his original character, the Teutonic representative of the universal Storm-God, riding on the blast, driving the clouds before him, and scattering them as a victorious general the foe. Then the storm sinks to rest—in that cavern of the winds, it may be, of which we read in Grecian fable,—yet the Storm-God is not dead, but sleeping; he is but spell-bound; he will return!

So thought our fathers in the early ages of the world, when they believed the powers of nature to be living godlike beings, acting after their own will. And yet, when all is said, this steadfast looking for a deliverer who shall bring back a Golden Age, which is so deeply rooted in the traditions of every nation, can hardly be regarded solely as a nature myth by those who remember how the promise of the Great Deliverer was given ere the gates of Eden closed on our first parents. Thence their descendants have everywhere carried with them the knowledge of the God who hideth His face for a season, and shall one day come again, making the clouds His chariot, and riding upon the wings of the wind.

CHAPTER IV.[1]

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS.

WILL-O'-THE-WISP.

"Gods in the garb of strangers to and fro
Wander the cities, and men's ways discern;
Yea, through the wide earth in all shapes they go,
Changed, yet the same, and with their own eyes learn
How live the sacred laws, who hold them, and who spurn."

WORSLEY'S *Odyssey*, Book xvii.

POPULAR imagination has generally supposed the Ignis Fatuus to be a departed soul, doomed for some reason or other to perpetual wandering. In Sweden it is believed that the ghosts of those who in their lifetime were guilty of removing their neighbours' landmarks, are fated thus to wander, lantern in hand; sometimes impelled to replace the old boundary mark, then to move it again, constantly changing their course with their changing purpose. In one of the Danish isles the wandering lights are thought to be the souls of unjust land-surveyors, trying to remedy the wrong measurement they have made; in other parts of Denmark they are the souls of wicked men trying to delude others to their death. In Belgium and the Netherlands they are the souls of unbaptized children, leading the way to water in hopes of being baptized in it by some charitable passer-by.[2] The fancy in England, as we all know, was that the light is carried by a mischievous elf—Puck, Hob

[1] In this and the following chapter I have gone more fully into the parallel legends than is perhaps quite within the limits of a merely local collection, because it does not appear that myths of Will-o'-the-Wisp and of marvellous cows have yet been fully dealt with by modern writers.

[2] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, Vol. II. pp. 97, 211, and Vol. III. p. 220.

Goblin, or Robin Goodfellow. 'Hoberdy's, or Hobany's, Lantern' was its name in Worcestershire within this century.[1]

The following story of Jack o' Lantern is given with a certain amount of reserve, inasmuch as I cannot say for certain how far it may be called a popular tradition of *Shropshire*. It was inserted in 'Shreds and Patches' (the antiquarian column of the *Shrewsbury Journal*), March 27th, 1877, by a correspondent who, when enquiry was made of him on behalf of the present work, could only say that he learnt it from an old local newspaper of which he had not kept the name or date. But as I have succeeded in finding at least *one* Salopian lady who could recollect having heard much such a story in her youth, though the details had faded from her memory, I have finally decided to let it appear here.

Once upon a time there came to a blacksmith's shop late one night, a traveller whose horse had cast a shoe, and he wanted the blacksmith to put it on for him. So Will (that was the man's name) was very ready, and he soon had it on again all right. Now the traveller was no other than the Apostle Saint Peter himself, going about to preach the Gospel; and before he went away he told the blacksmith to wish a wish, whatever he chose, and it should be granted him. 'I wish,' says Will, 'that I might live my life over again.' So it was granted him, and he lived his life over again, and spent it in drinking and gambling and all manner of wild pranks. At last his time came, and he was forced to set out for the other world, thinking of course to find a place in Hell made ready for him; but when he came to the gates the Devil would not let him in. No, he said, by this time Will had learnt so much wickedness that he would be more than a match for him, and he dared not let him come in. So away went the smith to Heaven, to see if St. Peter, who had been a good friend to him before, would find him a place there; but St. Peter would not, it wasn't very likely he would! and Will was forced to go back to the Old Lad again, and beg and pray for a place in Hell. But the Devil would not be persuaded even then. Will had spent two lifetimes in learning wickedness, and now he knew too much to be welcome anywhere. All that the Devil would do for

[1] ALLIES, *Antiquities and Folk-Lore of Worcestershire*, 1852, p. 412.

him was to give him a lighted coal from Hell-fire to keep himself warm, and that is how he comes to be called Will-o'-the-Wisp. So he goes wandering up and down the moors and mosses[1] with his light, wherever he can find a bit of boggy ground that he can 'tice folks to lose their way in and bring them to a bad end, for he is not a bit less wicked and deceitful now than he was when he was a blacksmith.

There can be no doubt that wherever this legend comes from, it is a genuine folk-tale handed down from olden days. Here is its counterpart from Thuringia.

Peter the smith of Juterbogk, who had been in the service of the Emperor Frederick Redbeard, lived a blameless life till he was more than a hundred years old. At length his patron Saint Peter came to him in the shape of a little old man riding a grey ass, which he wanted shod, and the smith did it for him. In payment St. Peter offered him three wishes, bidding him 'not forget the best.' Then the smith wished that whoever should climb into his pear-tree might never come down again till he gave the word, and that no one might come into his house without his leave, unless it were through the keyhole. 'Forget not the best,' said the old man. Then the smith wished that his flask might never be empty, 'for the best of all is a good dram.' The schnapps provided by this means proved an elixir of life, and on it the smith lived in comfort till at last Death knocked at the door. The smith persuaded him to get into his pear-tree, and there kept him a prisoner till he had agreed not to touch him for the future. So Death sent the Devil in his place, and the Devil came in through the keyhole. But the smith smelt brimstone, and was ready with a bag held to the inside of the keyhole, in which he tied up the Devil, and then hammered him in the forge till he swore never to come again. At last all the smith's friends and neighbours were dead, and he himself grew tired of life, so he set off to Heaven and begged his patron St. Peter to let him in. 'Take thyself hence,' said St. Peter; 'Heaven's gates are closed to thee. Thou didst not ask for *the best*, eternal happiness.' So the smith turned and took the broad road to Hell, but when the Devil heard he was coming, he slammed the door in his face. Then the smith

[1] Low-lying meadow-land, marshy ground. See *Shropshire Word-Book*.

found his way to the Kyfhauser, where his old master the Emperor sits among his knights and ladies, and there Peter of Juterbogk shoes the horses until the hour comes for the Emperor's return.[1]

A Norse variation of the same theme appears in 'that intensely heathen tale, the Master Smith.' The smith made a bargain with the Devil that he would belong to him at the end of seven years if in the mean time he might be the master smith of all the smiths in the trade, and he wrote over his door, 'Here dwells the Master over all Masters.' It was in the days when our Lord and St. Peter used to wander on the earth, and when they saw this they went in; and there our Lord proved by many wonders that He was Master of the master smith even in his own trade. Then our Lord offered to give him three wishes, whatsoever he desired. And the smith chose that whoever climbed into his pear-tree should stay till he told him to come down, that whoever sat in his easy-chair should stay till he asked him to get up, and that whoever should get into his steel purse should stay there till he asked him to get out. "'You have wished as a wicked man,' said St. Peter. 'First and foremost, you should have wished for God's grace and goodwill.' 'I durstn't look so high as that,' said the smith." So he got his three wishes, and each time the Devil came for him, the smith used them to keep him fast till he had agreed to lengthen the time of grace, and the last time, when he had persuaded him to get into the purse, he hammered it in the forge till the Devil cried for mercy and promised to come no more.

At last, however, the smith began to think he had so little chance of Heaven that it would be wise to make friends with the Devil, lest after death he should find no resting-place anywhere. So he set out for Hell to try if he could get in; but when the Devil saw him coming, he roared out to the watch to lock all the nine locks of the gates of Hell; 'for,' said he, 'if the smith only gets in, he'll turn Hell topsy turvy.' So the smith turned back and made his way to Heaven, and when he got there St. Peter was just opening the gates a very little to let in a poor little half-starved tailor. The smith threw his

[1] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, Vol. III. p. 103.

sledge-hammer to keep the gates open, 'and if he didn't get in then, when the gates were ajar, I don't know what has become of him.'[1]

There is a certain likeness between these three stories and the Welsh myth of Jack o' Lantern. Sion Dafydd of the Arfon Hills had sold himself to the Devil, but on condition that so long as he could cling to something the Devil should not be able to take him. At last the Devil snatched him away suddenly as he was at work in his garden, but Sion begged as a last favour that he might pick an apple from his old apple-tree to moisten his lips in Hell. The Devil consented, and let him down on the top of the tree; but of course Sion clung to it with all his might, and the Devil had to leave him there. 'But the old reprobate was too wicked for Heaven, and the Devil having failed to take him to the other place, he was turned into a fairy, and is now the Jack o' Lantern.'[2]

It is curious to see how the myth which in Germany and Scandinavia has no *raison d'être* is used in England and Wales to account for the *ignis fatuus*. Two points in it especially deserve notice: first, the idea that it is better to find a resting-place in the nether world than to have 'no house over one's head after death.' It is this thought—inherited from heathen times, when hell was not looked upon as a place of punishment, but merely as a less desirable abode than Valhalla, the Hall of the Chosen—which lies at the root of most ghost stories. Murderers and evil livers, not being welcome in any division of the spirit-world, are condemned to the worst of fates—eternal homeless wandering.[3]

The second point to be noted is, that the journeys of our Lord and His Apostles have taken the place, in popular tales, of that Wandering of the Gods 'either out of a spirit of adventure, or to buy the hearts of men,' which 'in all mythologies is the trait which most commonly occurs.'[4] 'The gods are come down to us in the

[1] DASENT, *Popular Tales from the Norse*, p. 106.

[2] WIRT SIKES, *British Goblins* (1880), p. 205.

[3] There is an old-fashioned popular song in Vol. XVII. of the Percy Society's publications, in which a scolding wife, arrived in the nether regions, proves more than a match for their master, who hastily returns her upon her husband's hands.

[4] DASENT, *Popular Tales from the Norse*, Preface, p. xlix.

likeness of men,' cried the Lycaonians, at the preaching of St. Paul and St. Barnabas; and they proceeded to identify their visitors with Jupiter and Mercury, the pair of deities in whom, as Canon Farrar has pointed out,[1] the local legend of Philemon and Baucis would make them suppose such an 'adventure' most natural. Moreover, 'the universal idea of the sanctity of the rites of hospitality, and the dread of turning a stranger from the door, took its origin from the fear lest the wayfaring man should be a divinity in disguise.'[2] 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,' we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' The allusion here is of course to the history of the Patriarchs; but so widespread and so deeply-rooted is the expectation of possible heavenly visitants, that we are tempted to think it another dim reminiscence of the life of our first parents in Eden.

[1] *Life of St. Paul*, Vol. I. 382.

[2] DASENT, *Popular Tales from the Norse*, Preface, p. xlix. See also *ibid.*, p. lvii.

CHAPTER V.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS.

THE WHITE COW OF MITCHELL'S FOLD.

"Mountains, on whose barren breast
The lab'ring clouds do often rest."
L'Allegro.

N the Corndon Hill, a bare moorland in the extreme west of Shropshire, stands a half-ruined stone circle known as 'Mitchell's Fold.' And thereto 'hangs a tale.'

'In times gone by, before any one now living can remember, there was once a dreadful famine all about this country, and the people had like to have been clemmed.[1] There were many more living in this part then, than what there are now, and times were very bad indeed. And all they had to depend upon was, that there used to come a fairy cow upon the hill, up at Mitchell's Fold, night and morning, to be milked. A beautiful pure white cow she was, and no matter how many came to milk her, there was always enough for all, so long as every one that came only took one pailful. It was in this way: if any one was to milk her dry, she would go away and never come again; but so long as every one took only a pailful apiece, she never would be dry. They might take whatever sort of vessel they liked, to milk her into, so long as it was only one apiece, she would always fill it. Well, and at last there came an old witch, Mitchell her name was. A bad old woman she was, and did a deal of harm, and had a spite against everybody. And she brought a riddle,[2] and milked the

[1] 'Had like to have been clemmed' = were nearly starved to death. See **Clem** in *Shropshire Word-Book.*

[2] Riddle = an iron sieve. See *Word-Book.*

cow into that, and of course the poor thing couldn't fill it. And the old woman milked her, and milked her, and at last she milked her dry, and the cow was never seen there again, not after. Folks say she went off into Warwickshire like a crazy thing, and turned into the wild dun cow that Guy Earl of Warwick killed; but anyhow they say she was sadly missed in this country, and a many died after she was gone, and there's never been so many living about here, not since. But the old woman got her punishment. She was turned into one of those stones on the hillside,[1] and all the other stones were put up round her to keep her in, and that's how the place came to be called Mitchell's Fold, because her name was Mitchell, you see. There used to be more stones than there are now, but they have been taken away at one time or another. It's best not to meddle with such places. There was a farmer lived by there, and he blew up some of them and took away the pieces to put round his horsepond, but he never did no good after.'

This story is very well known among the cottagers and others in that part of Shropshire, but is not often told in full detail. Variations of it of course are current. The witch is sometimes said to have been buried in the middle of the circle of stones, which was raised around her to 'keep her in,' *i. e.* to prevent her from 'coming again' as a ghost. The Rev. C. H. Hartshorne, writing in 1840, says that the people then told how '*the* giant used to milk his cow there,' until an old crone tried to milk her into a riddle, when she wandered into Warwickshire and became the Dun Cow—a legend recorded also in Gough's additions to Camden's *Britannia*, and which must therefore have been told in the same way for nearly a hundred years before Mr. Hartshorne's time.[2] It is another trace of the belief that the mountains were inhabited, and the mysterious monuments on them erected by a race of giants. 'Fold,' in Shropshire, means a farmyard. I suspect that the name 'Mitchell' was originally given not to the witch, but to the owner of the wondrous cow, and that Mitchell's Fold simply means the farmyard in which he milked

[1] See *Folk-Lore Record*, Vol. II. p. 177. Trolls turn to stone on the arrival of daylight. (See *Popular Tales from the Norse.*) So do giants and dwarfs in the Eddas. THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, I. 8.

[2] *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 38.

her.[1] Another cattle-owning giant appears in Yorkshire, namely 'Wade,' who is fabled to have built Mulgrave Castle, and to have paved 'Wade's Causeway' adjoining it, for the convenience of his wife's daily journeys to milk the monster cow whose yield supplied the chief part of their food.[2]

The story of the cow milked into a riddle is also localized at Grimsargh near Preston in Lancashire, where it is said that *in a time of drought* the inhabitants were supported on the milk of a gigantic dun cow, until an avaricious old woman milked her into a sieve, through which the milk passed into a succession of vessels constantly renewed. At last the cow died, either of exhaustion, or of distress on discovering the imposture, and she was buried in a spot known as the Cow Hill, where it is said that huge bones have been disinterred. In the porch of St. Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol, is, or was, preserved a whale's bone, popularly reputed to be the rib of a monster cow which once supplied the whole city with milk. And what is specially to the purpose, there is a Warwickshire tradition to the effect that the terrible Dun Cow had been driven mad by the over-milking of a witch.[3]

A certain resemblance is traceable between these English legends and the following story, translated from an old Welsh MS. There was once a milk-white milch-cow which travelled round the world, giving milk enough for all comers. Whoever drank of her milk immediately became wise, and was healed of whatsoever disease he had. She left calves behind her in every place, and from her all the milch-cows in the world are descended. At last she came to the Vale of Towey, and there the people attempted to kill and eat her; but as they were about to do so, she vanished from their hands and was never seen again.[4]

Again, in Scandinavian mythology we have the story of the cow

[1] Mitchell's Fold = Mickle or big fold (W.W.S.). Frequently pronounced *Midgel's* Fold, and sometimes also called Madge's Fold, Milking Fold, and Medgley's Fold. The last form appears as far back as 1752; see HARTSHORNE, *ut sup.*

[2] T. WRIGHT, F.S.A., in *Collectanea Archæologica*, Vol. I. Part 1.

[3] HARDWICK, *Traditions, Superstitions, etc.* (F.L.S., 1872), p. 110.

[4] WIRT SIKES, *British Goblins*, p. 38.

Audumbla, by whose milk the primæval giant Ymir was nourished before the existence of gods or men, and who herself lived by licking the salt hoarfrost from the *stones* which lay scattered upon the barren earth, and which were presently formed into Buri, the forefather of Odin and his brothers, who slew the giant Ymir.

The root of all these legends is the same. It is a real bit of primitive mythology, capable of a very simple explanation.

Mankind in the early ages of the world thought of the gods as of beings like ourselves, powerful indeed, but with habits, occupations, and possessions like those of men. 'Cry aloud,' said Elijah, mocking the prophets of Baal; 'for he is a god. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked:' and this earthly idea of divinity was not peculiar to the Phœnician nations. Our own early forefathers imagined the Upper World,—Asgard, the abode of the gods,—the Cloudland which they saw above them, to contain houses and rocks, and trees and animals, like this work-a-day world of ours. Sometimes they might be seen, sometimes they were hidden from men's eyes; but there in the pure ether the gods lived and moved and had their being, looking down upon and sometimes visiting the inhabitants of the gross material earth. We have already met with stories of the gods hunting, warring, and sleeping, but there was yet another occupation provided for them in the minds of the primitive Aryans.

Our forefathers were pre-eminently a cattle-feeding people, whose wealth lay in the abundance of their flocks and herds. And they dreamed of their gods as the lords of many cattle, whose milk-white and ruddy forms might be seen at dawn and sunset driven to and from their pasture in the broad expanse of heaven. Sometimes the clouds were hurried along rapidly before the wind: then the god of the winds was a robber, stealing the herds of the sun, as in the Grecian story of Hermes stealing the cattle of Apollo. When the clouds dropped rain upon the earth, the heavenly cows were being milked, and their milk falling from heaven enriched the earthly pastures and made the earthly cows yield plentifully. Quaint enough is the notion that the rain descends upon the earth through the holes of a gigantic sieve, but too simple to need much comment. More poetical

nations dreamed of fair young maidens, Naiads and Danaides, who perpetually poured water from their urns and sieves. But in the imagination of the harsher, sterner Teutons, the sieve is the peculiar property of the malicious witches whose rides through the air on broomsticks ('to sweep the cobwebs from the sky'), and whose meddling in brewing and dairy matters, are all signs that they are 'the degenerate and abhorred representatives of the ancient goddesses and their attendants, who were themselves developments of the primitive conception of the Cloud-women.'[1]

It has been ingeniously conjectured that the Aryan races were driven by degrees from their early home by the gradual drying up of the Caspian Sea, which once, it is thought, covered great tracts of what is now sandy desert. This, by decreasing the rainfall, would little by little render the fertile land barren, and less and less able to support the ever-increasing population. Can it be that the tribes in their migration carried with them some such story as this?—half myth, half tradition, localized here and there as they passed.

'Long ago, a heavenly milk-white cow used to come and rest morning and evening on the mountain-top above our homes. And her milk refreshed the earth and made it fertile, and all things prospered with us then. But there came a wicked goddess riding on the stormy wind one day, and milked the poor cow through a sieve, so that her milk fell on the earth in torrents, and when it ceased she disappeared. Since that time there has been a great drought, and we have had to wander away in search of pasture for our cattle.'

Something like this must surely have been the earlier form out of which arose the legend of the White Cow of Mitchell's Fold.

[1] KELLY, *Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition*, pp. 224, 229.

CHAPTER VI.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

CONCERNING BOGIES.

"Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite,
Called Robin Goodfellow; are you not he,
That frights the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk; and sometimes labour in the quern;
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he?"

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act II. Sc. I.

"Something betwixt Heaven and Hell,
Something that neither stood nor fell."

The Monastery.

ESIDES the Gods, and their foes the Giants, the northern mythology recognized other races of beings more familiar to man. There were the hard-working Dwarfs, who dwelt underground in caves and mines, where they forged ornaments and weapons for the gods; the mischievous and sullen Dark Elves, and the bright and airy Light Elves, inhabitants of Alfheim, one of the cloud-cities beside the Urdar Fount, under the Ash Yggdrasil. The introduction of Christianity, while it did away with the belief in the old gods, allowed these various classes of beings still to retain their hold over the popular imagination. Hence the innumerable stories of Elves, Fairies, Pixies, Brownies, Kobolds, Bergfolk, Elle-maids, Mermaids, Nixes, and so forth, to be met with in Teutonic Europe at the present day. The only effect that Christianity has had on the

ancient faith in these subordinate powers has been to give them a more unpleasing character. As the stupid brutal giant is transformed into the arch-fiend himself, so the friendly household spirit—once, it may be, a tutelary deity like the 'Lar' of the old Romans—becomes in later times a troublesome uncanny inmate, of whom the householder is anxious to be rid.[1]

A nursemaid from Worthen, in West Shropshire, used, about the year 1840, to amuse her charges with the following story of 'The Bŏŏgies an' the Saut-box,' which has thus been recorded by Miss Jackson [2] in the dialect of the Worthen district,—

'Behappen yo never 'eär'd the tale about the Saut-Box. Well, yo sin, theer wuz wunst some folks o' the name o' Runnells as lived at the Gorsty Bonk, an' they'd 'n a rar' good farm, an' the 'ouse wuz a good un on'y it wuz a nāncient owd place, as 'ad bin a fine mansion or summat o' that i' some king's reign. But the wurst on it wuz as it wuz 'aunted ŏŏth sperrits, or bŏŏgies, or whadever yo callen 'em, an' they wun like a lickle owd mon an' ŏŏman, an' the Runnellses wun plegged to djeth ŏŏth 'em, for they wun al'ays prancin' about the 'ouse an' the fowd an' the filds an' everyw'eer, an' nuthin couldna stond nor rest for 'em, an' they wun on for iverlastin' they wun that onlucky an gallus; an' they couldna get shet on 'em no rŏäd.

[1] See GRIMM, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 481.

[2] Boogy, a goblin, a mischievous household sprite. The Shropshire 'Boogy' is identical with the Yorkshire 'Bogie,' with the Lancashire 'Boggart,' with the Cheshire (and Montgomeryshire) 'Buggan.' It is the 'Puck' of the English and the 'Bogle' of the Scotch. These terms, 'Puck' and 'Bogle,' are the same as the German 'Spuk' and the Danish 'Spögelse,' which are older forms. They are general names for any kind of spirit, and correspond to the 'Pouke' of *Piers Plowman*. (G. F. J.)

See *Boogy* in *Shropshire Word-Book*; also note on the *Phooka* in CROFTON CROKER'S *Irish Fairy Legends*, ed. T. Wright, p. 183; and Welsh *Pwca* in *British Goblins*, p. 20.

[See my note on *Puck* in Notes to *Piers Plowman*, p. 310. The forms are very numerous; see my *Etym. Dictionary*, s. v. *puck*, and the Correction there given as to the etymology of *bug*. The form of the root is SPU, of doubtful sense, but possibly meaning 'to blow.' Hence G. *spuk*, a goblin, Dan. *spögelse*. Then, without initial *s*, we find Irish *puca*, W. *pwca*, *pwci*, Icel. *púki*, Mid. Eng. *pouke*, first found in Rich. Coer de Lion, Herefordsh. *pout* (with *t* for *k*), Devonshire *pixy*, &c. Also, with *b* for *p*, Gael. *bocan*, W. *bwg*, E. *bug*, &c. *Pug* is a weaker form of *Puck*.—W. W. S.]

'They fat the paas'n to 'em wunst; but they didna mind 'im, an' maden all manner o' game on 'im, an' I think as a wuz fritten'd at 'em.

'So at last they wun gotten so bad as the Runnellses couldna' pŭt up ŏŏth 'em no lunger; so they maden up thar minds to gŏŏ an live at a bytack a good way off, an' try an' o'erget the bŏŏgies.

'So they gotten thar things away a feow at a time, as they coulden, onknowens to the owd mon an' ŏŏman; till at last one night they gotten right clier off, an' lef' the bŏŏgies i' the empy 'ouse. So atter they wun cŏme to the new place, they fel'en fine an' glad as they wun got out on 'em so well, an' begunnen to onloäd an fettle up a bit. An everythin' wuz comen all right, but a nowd Saut-box as they wun oncommon fond on, an' begum if they hadna lef' 'im behind! An' they wun despert vexed an' toud the cowman to gŏŏ an' fatch 'im, but a wuz to be mighty carful as the bŏŏgies didna see 'im or goodnis knows whad.

'So a set out, an' a didna like the job at all, but they senten young Yeddart ŏŏth 'im, an' if yo'n believe me, they 'adna gwun no great way when begum who should they see, comin' alung right jimmy, but the owd mon an' ŏŏman; an' they sidden the cowman an' Yeddart in a minute, so it wunna no use on 'em tryin' to turn agen, an' they sen, "We'n brought yore saut-box, we'n brought yore saut-box."

'So then they all wenten to the 'ouse, an' the Runnellses wun in a most despert way when they sidden the bŏŏgies comin', but they tooken on 'em soft, an' maden out as they wun right glad to see 'em agen, an axt 'em to come in an' a some mate an' drink. So they wenten i' the best parlour, an' while they wun theer, the Runnellses got'n a lot o' chumps from the ŏŏd pil an' maden a rousin' big fire i' the brew'us, an' then they gotten a boutin o' straw an' pŭt i' front o' the fire, an' made the cowman lie down theer an' covered 'im all o'er ŏŏth the straw, an' then they axed the bŏŏgies to come an' warm 'em —for it wuz a coud time o' ear—an' pŭt 'em to set o' the boutin. So they gid 'em some bif an' a can o' drink, an' comen an' talked to 'em, an' toud 'em the raps, an' all on a sudden up jumps th' cowman an' chucks 'em right smack into the fire, straw an' all, an' then they

setten about an' proked 'em ŏŏth pikels an' besoms, an' kep' 'em i' the blaze till they wun all snirped up an burnt to ess. An' they never sid no more on 'em atter that, but wenten back to the Gorsty Bonk, an' ad'n some pace an' quietnis.'

I append a translation for the benefit of the unlearned!

'Maybe you never heard the tale about the salt-box. Well, you see, there was once some folks of the name of Reynolds, who lived at the Gorsey Bank, and they had a rare good farm, and the house was a good one, only it was an ancient old place, which had been a fine mansion or something of that sort in some king's reign. But the worst of it was that it was haunted with spirits, or bogies, or whatever you call them, and they were like a little old man and woman. And the Reynoldses were plagued to death with them, for they were always prancing about the house and the farmyard and the fields and everywhere, and nothing could either stand or rest for them, and they were "on" for everlasting, they were so troublesome and mischievous, and they could not get quit of them anyhow. They fetched the parson to them once, but they did not mind him, and made all manner of game of him, and I think he was frightened of them.

At last they got so bad that the Reynoldses could not put up with them any longer. So they made up their minds to go and live at another smaller farm they had a good way off, and try to escape from the bogies. So they got their things away a few at a time, as they could, unknown to the old man and woman, till at last one night they got right clear off, and left the bogies in the empty house. So, after they were come to the new place, they felt fine and glad that they had got quit of them so well, and they began to unload and tidy up a bit. And everything was come all right but an old salt-box that they were very fond of, and, my word! if they hadn't left that behind. And they were desperately vexed, and told the cowman to go and fetch it; but he was to be very careful that the bogies did not see him, or goodness knows what might happen.

'So he set out, and he did not like the job at all; but they sent young Edward with him; and if you'll believe me, they had not gone far when who should they see, coming along quite sprightly, but the old man and woman. And they saw the cowman and Edward

in a minute, so it was no use for them to try and turn back, and they said, "We've brought your salt-box; we've brought your salt-box."

'So then they all went to the house, and the Reynoldses were dreadfully put out when they saw the bogies coming; but they pretended to know nothing about it, and made out that they were right glad to see them again, and asked them to come in and have some food and drink. So they went into the best parlour, and while they were there the Reynoldses got a lot of chumps from the wood-pile and made a roaring fire in the brewhouse; and then they got a truss of straw and put it in front of the fire, and made the cowman lie down there, and covered him all over with the straw, and then they asked the bogies to come and warm themselves—for it was a cold time of year—and put them to sit on the truss of straw. So they gave them some beef and a can of beer, and came and talked to them, and told them the news, and suddenly up jumps the cowman and tumbles them right over into the fire, straw and all. And then they set to work, and poked them with pitchforks and brooms, and kept them in the blaze till they were all shrivelled up and burnt to ashes. And they never saw anything more of them after that, but went back to the Gorsey Bank and had some peace and quietness.'

Every one will recognize the *motif* of the foregoing story.

'His house, or so they say,
Was haunted by a jolly ghost, that shook
The curtains, whined in lobbies, tapt at doors,
And rummaged like a rat: no servant stay'd:
The farmer vext packs up his beds and chairs,
And all his household stuff; and with his boy
Betwixt his knees, his wife upon the tilt,
Sets out, and meets a friend, who hails him, "What?
You're flitting!" "Yes, we're flitting," says the ghost
(For they had pack'd the thing among the beds).
"Oh, well," says he, "you flitting with us too?
"Jack, turn the horses' heads, and home again."'[1]

[1] TENNYSON'S 'Walking to the Mail.' This is the same story that is told of a Lancashire 'boggart' in ROBY'S *Traditions*. For parallel stories of a Yorkshire boggart and Irish Cluricauns, see CROFTON CROKER, *Fairy Legends*, p. 107.

There seems to be hardly a country of Northern Europe which has not some variety of this legend, and only in one case, besides that of the 'Runnellses,' do the family succeed in getting rid of their inmate. In this one, the maids carrying their brooms to the new home heard the Nisses talking among the twigs, so they threw the brooms into a pond, whence ever after the Nisses might be heard in the evenings crying, 'We have removed! we have gone away!'

A German farmer tried fire, like the Salopians, but too late. He set his empty house on fire, and as he drove off he turned to look at the blaze, and beheld the Kobold in the cart behind him, who coolly observed, 'It was time for us to come out!'

Burning is the recognized way of getting rid of Trolls in Scandinavia. They vanish from sight at the rising of the sun, but can only be destroyed by fire.[1] The fondness of the bogies for sitting before the fire, of which the 'Runnellses' took advantage to make an end of them, appears in the account of the household familiar given by Gervase of Tilbury in the thirteenth century. He is described as a very little old man who loved to warm himself before the fire when the family were gone to rest, but who invisibly played all kinds of pranks on them by day, and could not be expelled either by holy water or exorcism.[2]

The 'lickle owd 'ooman' is a feature in the story which I have not found elsewhere. Grimm even remarks it as a characteristic of the domestic elf, that he is always masculine, not feminine.[3]

The same thing is told of a Welsh Bwbach in WIRT SIKES's *British Goblins*, p. 117; of a Danish Niss in THORPE's *Northern Mythology*, II. 161. Of other Nisses in the adjoining countries of Schleswig and Holstein the same story occurs three times in Thorpe (III. 55). It is again related of the Kobolds of Germany by Thorpe (III. 84), and by KEIGHTLEY, *Fairy Mythology*, p. 141. In every case there is some variety of detail. Of all the various kinds of goblins the Niss (not to be confounded with *Nix*, a water-sprite) seems to answer most closely to our Bogy.

[1] In one story, by scalding to death. *Prince Hatt under the Earth*, in THORPE's *Yule Tide Stories*, p. 33. See also *Popular Tales from the Norse*.

[2] "Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength."—*L'Allegro*.

[3] *Deutsche Mythologie*, 467.

Another household goblin was believed to haunt a little inn at Wem's Northwood, in the north of Shropshire (so called to distinguish it from Northwood near Ellesmere). He was in the habit of sitting cross-legged on the barrels in the cellar, but he made his presence known by various disturbances of the usual kind. The tea-things shook and rattled in the cupboard, and jumped up and down on the table, and once the hot buttered toast set down before the fire was seen to jump about too! At last the spirit was 'laid' in the cellar.[1]

Grimm remarks that while the hardworking brownie is a solitary being, the mischievous goblins usually appear in numbers, disturbing the rest of the household by their nightly pranks. So far we have not found this to be the case, but I may perhaps be permitted to give an example of it from a country village in Staffordshire, a very few miles from the boundary of Shropshire.

In this village there stood within the memory of persons living in 1881, a beautiful old moated mansion of Henry VIII.'s time, called Norbury Manor. In the middle of the eighteenth century it was deserted by its owners, and after a time sold and turned into a farm-house. Ruinous and only half-inhabited, it was just the place for ghosts, and haunted it presently became. At length, some time during the first twenty years of the present century, it was pulled down, 'because,' said the old people of the neighbourhood, 'it was so badly haunted'; and the fine old squared stones of which it was partly built were used to erect a bald 'four-square' farm-house, about a hundred yards from the old site. But the ghosts had 'flitted' with the stones. Night after night they might be heard disporting themselves in the empty rooms and passages. Whenever brewing was to be done, and the brewing vessels were put out overnight in readiness for beginning work in the early morning, all night long the smell and sounds of brewing might be perceived, though nothing could be

[1] This was related in 1881, by a maidservant from Welshampton, near Ellesmere, whom we shall often have occasion to mention. She used the words 'spirit' and 'ghost' in telling the story. The word 'goblin,' which would have seemed more suitable, is used in that neighbourhood to mean *devil*. A story-telling child is frightened with the threat, 'the goblins will come for you.'

seen; and in the morning the vessels were always found clean and empty just as they had been left the evening before.

All this was believed to be going on during the tenancy of a Mr. ——, still living, who held the farm 1860-70, or thereabouts. One day a friend came to see Mr. ——, and was asked to stay and spend the evening there; so the pair sat together, and had something to drink, and enjoyed themselves very much. At last it was time for the guest to leave, so Mr. —— took a lantern and went with him to 'th' 'ackney stable' to get his horse. But instead of finding it alone, as they had left it, there was another horse beside it—a beautiful grey, which started and fidgetted as they came in, and rattled the chain which fastened it to the manger. 'That's a nice-looking nag you've got there,' said the visitor, suspecting nothing. 'But Mr. —— said nothing, *for he knew what it was.* And sure enough, in the morning the tother 'orse was gone.' So ended a farmer friend of the ——e, telling the story in full faith, without a thought of the optical delusions which were not unlikely to be the consequence of the sort of 'pleasant evening' which the worthy pair had spent!

On the other side of Shropshire, I am told that years ago Minsterley Hall (in the same country as Worthen and Rorrington), had the character of being haunted. Stones were thrown about at night by no human hand. This sort of nightly disturbance is commonly attributed to ghosts now-a-days, but the troubles of such 'haunted houses' as these ought properly to be laid to the door of bogies of the elfish kind, occupied either in mischievous play or in the homely domestic work of brewing, churning, or sweeping.

The next story—'The Welsh Servant'—sets the household familiar before us in his other character, as the hard-working friend of man.

It is perhaps a hundred years or more since a certain Mr. Nichols lived at Yockleton Park, some miles west of Shrewsbury, farming his land and bringing up a large family of sons and daughters. One summer he engaged a Welshman to help in the harvest, and as he proved industrious and a good workman, he was allowed by his own wish to stay on through the winter, till the usual West Shropshire

'changing time,' in May. He was lodged and boarded in the house of course. 'The men'—*i. e.* the unmarried farm-labourers—were an important part of every homely country household in those days. Well, time went on; the Welshman continued to 'give satisfaction,' and nothing unusual occurred during his stay, till one night during 'the Christmas,' the whole family were suddenly aroused just after midnight by an extraordinary noise downstairs, something like heavy chains being dragged about, clanking and rumbling. Hours were early in those days, every one had long been in bed, and they were perplexed and frightened. The farmer's sons got up and called the men, and all went down in a body to see what was the matter. Everything was perfectly quiet; the furniture was all in its place, no one was about, nothing was to be seen or heard. Then the Welshman proposed to go out-of-doors; but his masters, unnerved by finding it impossible to account for the mysterious noise, refused to allow the door to be opened. Still the man persisted. 'I *must* go out,' he said, 'I cannot rest in!' He urged his request with so much earnestness and anxiety, that at last, impressed by his excited manner, they opened the door. Out went the man at once into the black darkness, all alone. The door was shut and barred behind him —the awe-stricken watchers waited and listened—

He never came back!

What became of him no one ever knew; his wages lay unclaimed in his master's hands, put carefully aside in readiness for his return: but alive or dead, the Welsh servant was never seen nor heard of more.

This story was long afterwards related by one of the daughters of the house to her grand-daughter, now an old lady, from whom we have it. She gave it as a narrative of facts, 'believed in the family to be perfectly true,' with no hint of any supernatural character attaching to the Welsh servant; yet I cannot but regard him as a modern *rationalized* version of the trusty 'drudging goblin,' who takes service with an earthly master, and generally vanishes mysteriously at last.[1]

[1] See the well-known story from Giraldus Cambrensis, in WRIGHT'S *Essays on the Middle Ages*, I. 269. Compare the Danish story of the 'Troll Turned Cat,'

It is to be noted that his disappearance took place 'in the Christmas,' as Shropshire folk call the mystic Twelve Days, which, long before the Christian era, were the 'witching time,' when spiritual beings were abroad, and when, if ever, the lawful master of the goblin servant might be expected to come and claim his own.[1] Thus, when the Wild Huntsman leaves one of his hounds in a German peasant's house, it must remain howling and whining on the hearth till Christmas comes, when it is summoned to rejoin the pack as they sweep by once more.

It commonly happens that a neighbour folk speaking an unknown tongue gain the character of having something uncanny about them.[2] Mr. Baring-Gould amusingly tells us how in his childhood a Devonshire nurse impressed him with the belief that all Cornishmen had tails. He actually asked a Cornish bookseller of his acquaintance if such were the case, and finally 'satisfied' his 'own mind that the good man had sat his off.'[3] Professor Rhys observes that the children of Englishmen and Scotchmen settled in Wales are reported to be descended from the fairies,[4] and it cannot surprise us to find a Welshman playing the part of an elfin serf in Shropshire. Indeed, some have gone so far as to say that the whole belief in elves—their mischievous pranks, their dwellings among tumuli and prehistoric

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in THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, II. 123, and its parallels from Ireland, Northumberland, and Lancashire, in the volumes of *Notes and Queries* for 1852, 1860, 1861. One of the German names for the domestic elf is *Katermann*. Even Odin once appears in the character of 'drudging goblin,' when he hires himself to the giant Baugi, to do the work of nine thralls for a whole summer.

[1] It is a current saying among the clerks of an old Shropshire solicitor now living, that their master will never die *till he is fetched*.

[2] In Germany and Holland, England is regarded as the native country of witches and night-hags. In Brittany it is the land of the dead (KELLY). A North German legend in THORPE'S *Yule Tide Stories* shows a Russian princess as a being of superior powers. All over the north of Europe, Russians, Finns, and Lapps are accounted wizards by other nations. In NAPIER'S *Folk-Lore of the West of Scotland* (p. 76) a Highland herd-boy is accused by his Lowland fellow-servants of practising the Black Art.

[3] *Curious Myths*, 1st series, 2nd ed., p. 145. [The Kentishmen were also supposed to have tails, and in the Romance of *Richard Coer de Lion* (early 14th century), the Saracens credit the English with possessing them, and call Richard himself the Tailed King. W. W. S.]

[4] *Welsh Fairy Tales*, in *Y Cymmrodor* for October, 1881.

monuments, their habit of taking service with mankind—is due to the existence of a barbarous people living in concealment or in servitude amongst a conquering race, as a remnant of the Britons may have done among the English. The doings of such a people may very probably have been attributed to elves and goblins, and so have strengthened and added details to the belief in them, but it seems too persistent and too widely spread to be entirely accounted for in this way. The *primary* source of the belief is more probably to be referred to the times when mankind, as it is supposed, tried to account for the phenomena of the skies by figuring to themselves that powerful invisible beings rode on white or dappled-grey horses through the air, swept the clouds from their path with gigantic brooms, and churned and brewed them into storm and tempest.

CHAPTER VII.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

CONCERNING FAIRIES.

"Neither substance quite, nor shadow,
Haunting lonely moor and meadow,
Dancing by the haunted spring,
Riding on the whirlwind's wing."

The Monastery.

THE last chapter treated of indoor elves; of the merry out-door sprites who, in later English, acquired the name of fairies there is much less to tell.[1] Indeed, at one time I thought that the whole subject, like that of Snakes in Norway, might be dismissed with the words, 'There are no fairies in Shropshire.' One or two people whom I questioned in different parts of the county (but only one or two out of many) had 'heard say' that the fungus rings in old meadow-land were caused by the fairies dancing; and Mr. Wright notes that the Beacon Ring—an old circular camp enclosed with an unusually high vallum, on the highest point of the Long Mountain, nearly adjoining the Welsh border—is held to be haunted by them.[2] Something more definite than these vague traditions was gathered from a North Salopian, who deposed that the cemetery at Market Drayton has many fairy rings in it, and that up

[1] *Collectanea Archæologica*, Vol. I. Part 1.

[2] *Fairishes*, the old name for them at Bridgnorth, is marked *obsolete* in *Shropshire Word-Book*. It was still in common use in Mr. Hartshorne's time (1840). Professor Skeat informs us that it seems to be a corruption of *fairieses* (Sussex, *farises*, turned by dictionary-makers into *Pharisees*, but really), a double plural, like the *postesses*—pronounced *pawsusses* about NEWPORT (Salop)—of some dialects—*e.g.*, the 'Blue Postesses' Inn of *Peter Simple*.

to the present day the people are very reluctant to bury their dead on the side of the cemetery where the rings are to be seen.[1]

This was the nearest approach I could make to any acquaintance with the fairies till, in June, 1881, a kind friend took me to see an old man, John Thomas by name, living at Cross Houses near Shrewsbury. He was full of old-world stories and recollections of his boyhood near Bishop's Castle over fifty years ago. There, when still very young, he was 'pŭt prentice' to a shoemaker-farmer at the Bishop's Moat near Bishop's Castle,—his own 'native,'—and with seven other lads lived in his master's house, making shoes and working on the farm by turns, as might be needed. I happened to ask him if he had ever heard of the 'Seven Whistlers,' and he, not understanding my question, replied, 'Dun you mean little things as come in the night-time, and sing, and whistle, and make music, and *daince* on the commons and such places? But *they* bin har mess. Fairies, they call'n 'em. I've heerd o' *them*, but I never knew any one see 'em.'

Further inquiry a few days later produced a little more. 'About the fairies, it's only what I've heerd folks say; I never sid [saw] none myself. Theer used to be great talk on 'em fiddling and daincing on boggy ground and places i' the middle o' the night. They was very little people daincing about, but I canna tell nothin' about 'em because I never sid 'em. I've never heerd nothin' about 'em since I've bin in *this* country, but there used to be great talk about 'em when I was a boy. I've bin down in this country now for about fifty year.'

So far John Thomas. If 'story he had none to tell,' still he had what other Salopians I have talked with have failed to show, a traditional knowledge of the nature and habits of the fairy race, once so well-known throughout England. Of the underground realm, whence they issued to perform their nightly gambols, he could say nothing. But the entrance to fairyland is still pointed out elsewhere

[1] 'In a Shropshire village near Coalbrookdale it is still said that fairies dance in an adjoining field, and that any unlucky wight who stepped within the ring would be kept there, and never allowed to leave the spot.'—HENDERSON'S *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, 2nd ed., p. 277. I have not been able to identify this village or to add anything to the above.

in Shropshire, namely, the *Ogo Hole*, a cavern on the English side of the Llanymynech Hill, not far from Oswestry,[1] once the mouth, it is supposed, of a copper mine worked by the Romans. Roman coins have been found in it, and golden ornaments, and human bones.[2] Old people tell that when they were young few dared venture to explore its mysterious passages, some of which are thought to lead directly under Llanymynech village. An old blind fiddler once wandered into them by accident, and journeyed on and on underground, playing his violin as he went, till the people in the cellars of the village inn at Llanymynech heard the strains of the instrument far in the depths below.[3] Mr. Wirt Sikes has a weird story (*British Goblins*, p. 99) of a fiddler who rashly attempted to explore a similar mysterious cave, and was doomed to fiddle in its recesses to all eternity. Long years after the wild sounds of his one magical tune, 'Ffarwel Ned Pugh,' disturbed the congregation of a little village church, beneath which the windings of the cavern had led its unhappy prisoner.

Some faint remembrance appears here of the famous fairy music, to which if any man shall listen, seven years shall seem to him as one day, and if any man shall learn the tune, he shall set whoever hears it a-dancing. Even of late years men have believed that they heard the strains of this magic music in Shropshire, or so it appears from the following extract from *In Gipsy Tents*, a narrative of recent visits to West Midland Gipsy Folk, published so lately as 1880.

'The curiousest thing that ever happened to we' [said a gipsy man to the author] 'was at Friar's Ditton, off by the Clee Hills yonder. It must have been about twelve o'clock at night, and we

[1] Ogo, from Welsh *Ogof* = a cavern. In the N. W. corner of Shropshire, round about Oswestry, there are a good many places bearing Welsh names. This part of the county is in the Diocese of St. Asaph, and a small portion of it lies west of Offa's Dyke. A few more such names occur in remote parts of Clun Forest, but they are not general on the western borders.

The Peak Cavern in Derbyshire appears once to have borne a similar reputation to the Ogo Hole. See *Border Minstrelsy*, Vol. II. 125. Sir Walter Scott lso quotes (*ibid.* p. 143) an account of a journey into Fairyland from *Orfeo and Heurodis*—

'*In at a roche* the leuedis rideth.'

[2] See HARTSHORNE, *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 60.

[3] We are indebted to Mr. Askew Roberts for this information.

were stopping in a bit of a wood, with a little brook running down below. It was Lemmy here, she heard some very curious tunes right atween the tents, but nigher the boys' than ours. Just like a lot of fiddles it was, a long way off, but wonderful clear and sweetsome; and Lemmy kicked me—but there! I never took no hearkenings, only grunted, leastwise so she said next morning. And the boys, they hadn't heard nought neither; but the bailiff of the fine doctor said, "Oh, I've often heard that myself; that's the fairies!"'[1]

Old Betty Cooper of Edgmond (whose claim to speak with authority on any and every subject, was, that though she was 'not the owdest widdy i' the parish, she'd bin a widdy the lungest of annybody i' the parish') once told me how her father, when going along the footpath under Chetwynd Park wall late one night, heard 'the most beautiful'st moosic as ever 'e 'eerd in 's life, up i' the air, but 'e didna *see* nothin'.' But she was much more inclined to attribute the sweet sounds to angels than to fairies. I never heard a word about the fairies from any of the Edgmond people, though they were superstitious enough in some respects, as will be seen when we come to the subjects of Ghosts and Witchcraft.[2]

So long ago as Chaucer's time the cry was raised that,

'Now can no man see non elvés mo.'

Warned by that example, it is somewhat rash to assert that the fairies are dead, although they be but little regarded in comparison

[1] F. H. GROOME, *In Gipsy Tents*, p. 7. I have the greatest confidence in the accuracy of this work, as the gipsies, whose sayings are reported in it, frequently describe, with extraordinary fidelity, out-of-the-way hamlets and bye-lanes which I know perfectly well, but which Mr. Groome has evidently never seen. Indeed, the little mistake of 'Friar's Ditton' for Ditton Priors (as given above) seems to me to show how faithfully he repeats what he heard from his gipsy friends, without addition or embellishment.

[2] Apropos of fairy music, it may be observed that the most approved theory of the origin of the word *elf* (German Alb, Alp, Elbe) is, that it is the same as the Sanscrit Arbhus or Ribhus—storm-spirits, whose voices are heard in the wild song of the winds, and whose name, according to some etymologists, appears again in Greece as that of the world-famed musician Orpheus. The strains of the fairy-prisoned fiddlers in the depths of the Ogo caverns remind us of the northern Orpheus, the Piper of Hamelin, playing his magic music as he vanishes into the hill-side with the children he has lured to follow him. See BARING-GOULD, *Curious Myths*, 2nd series, p. 152.

with other objects of the superstitious creed. The traces of them which we have been able to collect, few and faint though they be, yet come from all quarters of the county, and are sufficiently detailed to show that there was a time once when the Fairy Mythology prevailed in all its fulness in Shropshire as in other parts of Great Britain.

Indeed, Shropshire men must have been well acquainted with the fairies five hundred years ago. It was reported then, that our famous champion Wild Edric had had an Elf-maiden for his wife.[1] One day, we are told, when he was returning from hunting in the forest of Clun,[2] he lost his way and wandered about till nightfall, alone, save for one young page. At last he saw the lights of a very large house[3] in the distance, towards which he turned his steps, and when he had reached it, he beheld within a large company of noble ladies dancing. They were exceedingly beautiful, taller and larger than women of the human race,[4] and dressed in gracefully-shaped linen garments. They circled round with smooth and easy motion, singing a soft low song of which the hunter could not understand the words. Among them was one maiden who excelled all the others in beauty, at the sight of whom our hero's heart was inflamed with love. Forgetting the fears of enchantment, which at the first moment had seized him, he hurried round the house, seeking an entrance, and having found it, he rushed in, and snatched the maiden who was the object of his passion from her place in the moving circle. The dancers assailed him with teeth and nails, but backed by his page, he escaped at length from their hands, and succeeded in carrying off his fair captive.

[1] See the Chronicle of Walter Mapes, *De Nugis Curialis, Distinctio* II. *ch.* xii. (12th century), edited by Thomas Wright, F.S.A., for the Camden Society, 1850. We owe it to the Rev. H. B. Taylor, St. John's College, Cambridge, that we are able to insert this story.

[2] Mr. Taylor's MS. extract from Mapes has 'Forest of Dean,' but this is evidently the error of a copyist. Edric had no connection, either in fact or fiction, with Gloucestershire, whereas Lydbury, where our chronicler fancies he lived, is on the very borders of Clun Forest, and most of his estates lay in South Shropshire, see p. 25.

[3] 'Such as those drinking-houses the English have in every diocese, called *gildhus* in English.' The Troll-wives of Scandinavia dance in a house raised on pillars.

[4] In this they resembled the Welsh Tylwyth Teg. See KEIGHTLEY, *Fairy Mythology*, 409.

For three whole days, not his utmost caresses and persuasions could prevail on her to utter a single word, but on the fourth day she suddenly broke the silence. 'Good luck to you, my dear!' said she, 'and you will be lucky too, and enjoy health and peace and plenty, as long as you do not reproach me on account of my sisters, or the place from which you snatched me away, or anything connected with it. For on the day when you do so you will lose both your bride and your good fortune; and when I am taken away from you, you will pine away quickly to an early death.'

He pledged himself by all that was most sacred to be ever faithful and constant in his love for her: and they were solemnly wedded in the presence of all the nobles from far and near, whom Edric invited to their bridal feast. At that time William the Norman was newly made king of England, who, hearing of this wonder, desired both to see the lady, and to test the truth of the tale; and bade the newly-married pair to London, where he was then holding his court. Thither then they went, and many witnesses from their own country with them, who brought with them the testimony of others who could not present themselves to the king. But the marvellous beauty of the lady was the best of all proofs of her superhuman origin. And the king let them return in peace, wondering greatly.

Many years passed happily by, till one evening Edric returned late from hunting, and could not find his wife. He sought for her and called her for some time in vain. At last she appeared. 'I suppose,' began he, with angry looks, 'it is your sisters who have detained you such a long time, have they not?'

The rest of his upbraiding was addressed to thin air, for the moment her sisters were mentioned she vanished. Edric's grief was overwhelming. He sought the place where he had found her at first, but no tears, no laments of his could call her back. He cried out day and night against his own folly, and pined away and died of sorrow, as his wife had long before foretold.[1]

[1] The chronicler adds that their son Alnod or Elfnoth—the only man of mingled mortal-and-elfin race ever known to prosper—gave Lydbury North to the Bishopric of Hereford, in gratitude for his cure of palsy while praying at the shrine of St. Ethelbert of Hereford. This is altogether inaccurate. No such person as Alnod appears in Domesday Book, which, on the other hand, shows

It is very curious to find that Wild Edric was already the centre of myth and legend within scarcely more than a century of his own life-time.

The marriage of an Elf-maid and a mortal is one of the commonest themes of legend.[1] Generally the lady is caught while bathing, though the water is not always her native element. Sometimes she appears in the first place as a bird,—in the Faroes and Shetland Islands as a seal,—and lays aside her plumage to enter the water (or leaves her sealskin on the rocks).[2] The adventurous hero steals the plumage and has the lady at his mercy. Should she ever find the plumage again, she will at once take flight for ever.

In other cases the bride imposes—or rather the laws of her nature impose—some condition on her captor, on breaking which he forfeits her for ever. Thus Melusina forbids her husband to visit her on Saturdays. The Troll-wife in Denmark is never to be hurried. The Lady of Little Van Lake vanishes on receiving the last of 'three causeless blows,' and the many other Gwragedd Annwn, or Ladies of the Lake, whom bold Welshmen are reported to have captured, must never be touched with cold iron, either by accident or design.

A Swedish peasant every morning found circles trampled in his meadow, and marks of footsteps in the dew. His sons kept watch by turns to discover the culprits, and the youngest saw three doves come flying, who laid aside their plumages and danced on the grass in the form of three maidens. He stole the plumages, and refused to return them till the fairest of the maidens promised to become his

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that Lydbury already belonged to the see of Hereford in Edward the Confessor's time. The Chronicler of John Brompton says it was given to the Bishops in the eighth century by one Egwin Shakehead under similar circumstances. Lydbury was the largest manor in Shropshire, and included within its area the little town of Bishop's Castle before-mentioned, which has grown up around the manorial castle of the Bishops of Hereford. See EYTON, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, Vol. XI. 194.

[1] For parallel stories, see BARING-GOULD, *Curious Myths*, II. 206; *Northern Mythology*, II. 69; *Fairy Mythology*, pp. 20 (Persian), 122, 163, 169, 409; *British Goblins*, 38, *et seq.*; *Y Cymmrodor* for October, 1881; *Irish Fairy Legends*, p. 239, and note; KENNEDY, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* (p. 280 ?); CAMPBELL, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, III. 400.

[2] It appears to me that we have here a more primitive form of faith in the elfin world.

wife, which she was obliged to do, as the sun was rising and it was time for her to depart. But the new bride could never remain with her husband after daybreak, for by day she was in bondage to a Troll, to whose service she always returned at sunrise. Her husband, after many adventures, found out and slew the Troll, and so set free his wife.[1]

Here the lady is captured, like Wild Edric's bride, while dancing with her companions in elfin circles, instead of while bathing, as usual in such stories. This is noteworthy, as it helps to show how slight is the line of demarcation between the light-footed, earth-treading, dancing fairies, and the fair inhabitants of the waters, of whom we shall have something to say in the next chapter. Both kinds of nymphs must have grown up alike out of old-world imaginings about the singing murmuring winds, the flight of swans, and the fleecy clouds visiting the earth in the form of clinging white mists, brooding over bogs and streams.[2]

[1] THORPE, *Yule Tide Stories*—'The Beautiful Palace East of the Sun and North of the Earth.'

[2] See *Curious Myths*, II. 296, and *Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition*, p. 21.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

CONCERNING MERES AND POOLS.

"And on the borders of those lands, 'tis told,
  There lies a lake, some dead great city's grave,
Where, when the moon is at her full, behold
  Pillar and palace shine up from the wave!
And o'er the water glideth, still and dark,
Seen but by seers, a spectre and a bark."

LORD LYTTON'S *King Arthur*, Bk. IV. st. 49.

"The seas are still, yet hear we sweet bells ringing,
  Soft, melodious, from their choral cave;
Strange muffled voices, mystic legends singing,
  The wonder-city 'neath the dark blue wave."

From the German.

THE north and north-east parts of Shropshire differ greatly in physical features from the south and south-west. Almost all the country on the right bank of the Severn consists of long parallel ranges of hills, sometimes rising with abruptness, height, and dignity, which would more than entitle them to the name of 'mountains' in Wales. More often, though, the quiet valleys are bounded by long level ridges, lying one beyond another in regular gradations of geological formation, from the New Red Sandstone at Bridgnorth to the Cambrian rocks of the Longmynd beyond Church Stretton—the coal cropping out at the *top* of the Brown Clee Hill, and the wilder and more mountainous country in the extreme west, rich in veins of lead ore. On the left bank of the Severn, on the eastern border of the county, lies a little 'black country,' the Shropshire coal-field—'the works,' as it was always called at Edgmond. It was

once pretty undulating country, but is now spoilt by coal-pits and smoke. At the head of it stands the steep solitary Wrekin, like a giant sentinel on guard. But all to the north of Shrewsbury is one great level, broken only here and there by low 'bluffs'—Haughmond, Hawkstone, Grinshill, Nesscliff, and others—such as would seem very insignificant farther south. This is 'the great Shropshire plain,' bounded towards Wales by hills again (Llanymynech, the Breidden, etc.), but stretching far away into Cheshire on the north. Once, say the geologists, this was the bed of an enormous lake, in which the Wrekin and the other lesser hills must have appeared like tiny islets, and which in some prehistoric time was slowly drained, as the Severn worked a passage for itself through the hills, where the Iron Bridge now stands, and so found an outlet for the waters of the lake, of which the traces are now left in many a 'mere,' 'pool,' 'moor,' and 'moss,' in the northern parts of the county.

Only two of these 'meres,' to the best of my belief, lie on the right bank of 'Sivern.' These are Bomere and Shomere, two pools closely adjoining each other, three or four miles south of Shrewsbury, of which it is said that 'when Bomere meets Shomere, the world will come to an end.' About Shomere I do not know anything else of interest, but of the gloomy Bomere Pool (as it is called by tautology), legends are 'brief,' *i. e.* plentiful. I give the one following in the words of a clergyman, a native of that neighbourhood, who had been familiar with it in his boyhood.

'Many years ago, a village stood in the hollow which is now filled up by the mere. But the inhabitants were a wicked race, who mocked at God and His priest. They turned back to the idolatrous practices of their fathers, and worshipped Thor and Woden; they scorned to bend the knee, save in mockery, to the White Christ who had died to save their souls. The old priest earnestly warned them that God would punish such wickedness as theirs by some sudden judgment, but they laughed him to scorn. They fastened fish-bones to the skirt of his cassock, and set the children to pelt him with mud and stones. The holy man was not dismayed at this; nay, he renewed his entreaties and warnings, so that some few turned from their evil ways and worshipped with him in the little chapel which

stood on the bank of a rivulet that flowed down from the mere on the hill-side.

'The rains fell that December in immense quantities. The mere was swollen beyond its usual limits, and all the hollows in the hills were filled to overflowing. One day when the old priest was on the hill-side gathering fuel, he noticed that the barrier of peat, earth, and stones, which prevented the mere from flowing into the valley, was apparently giving way before the mass of water above. He hurried down to the village and besought the men to come up and cut a channel for the discharge of the superfluous waters of the mere. They only greeted his proposal with shouts of derision, and told him to go and mind his prayers, and not spoil their feast with his croaking and his kill-joy presence.

'These heathen were then keeping their winter festival with great revelry. It fell on Christmas Eve. The same night the aged priest summoned his few faithful ones to attend at the midnight mass, which ushered in the feast of our Saviour's Nativity. The night was stormy, and the rain fell in torrents, yet this did not prevent the little flock from coming to the chapel. The old servant of God had already begun the holy sacrifice, when a roar was heard in the upper part of the valley. The server was just ringing the Sanctus bell which hung in the bell-cot, when a flood of water dashed into the church, and rapidly rose till it put out the altar-lights. In a few moments more, the whole building was washed away, and the mere, which had burst its mountain barrier, occupied the hollow in which the village had stood. Men say that if you sail over the mere on Christmas Eve, just after midnight, you may hear the Sanctus bell tolling.'

Here is another variant of the same legend, related to me by a lady in the parish of Condover, 1881.

In the days of the Roman empire, when Uriconium was standing, a very wicked city stood where we now see Bomere Pool. The inhabitants had turned back from Christianity to heathenism, and though God sent one of the Roman soldiers to be a prophet to them, like Jonah to Nineveh, they would not repent. Far from that, they ill-used and persecuted the preacher. Only the daughter of the governor remained constant to the faith. She listened gladly to the

Christian's teaching, and he on his part loved her, and would have had her to be his wife. But no such happy lot was in store for the faithful pair. On the following Easter eve, sudden destruction came upon the city. The distant Caradoc[1] sent forth flames of fire, and at the same time the city was overwhelmed by a tremendous flood, while 'the sun in the heavens danced for joy, and the cattle in the stalls knelt in thanksgiving that God had not permitted such wickedness to go unpunished.'[2]

But the Christian warrior was saved from the flood, and he took a boat and rowed over the waters, seeking for his betrothed, but all in vain. His boat was overturned, and he too was drowned in the depths of the mere. Yet whenever Easter eve falls on the same day as it did that year, the form of the Roman warrior may be seen again, rowing across Bomere in search of his lost love, while the church bells are heard ringing far in the depths below.

It is very curious to notice how the same story is varied by the tone of the story-teller's mind and habits of thought. The peasant version of the legend is probably that given by Mr. Wright, who says that the village which once occupied the site of Bomere 'was submerged as a punishment for the irreligion of the principal farmer in the place, who persisted in cutting his grain on Sunday. It is said that at intervals glimpses of houses and buildings have been seen in the depths of the waters, and that children have been heard crying below, and especially that the church bells have been heard ringing on Sunday mornings.'[3]

Most of the meres of Shropshire lie round about the little market town of Ellesmere. The largest and most beautiful of these seven sisters is Ellesmere itself, which is about a hundred and sixteen acres in extent; and there are besides, within a circuit of a few miles, Newton Mere, Whitemere, Blackmere, Kettlemere, Croesmere, and

[1] The highest and most picturesque of the Stretton Hills, crowned by a British entrenchment which some have supposed to be the scene of Caractacus's last stand. See p. 94.

[2] These words were repeated as a sort of formula necessary to the proper telling of the story. Their connection with the two dates (Christmas Eve and Easter Eve) assigned for the destruction, is striking. See further under *Days and Seasons*.

[3] *Coll. Arch.*, Vol. I. Part I.

Colemere. Of the last two, the same superstition holds good as at Bomere, namely, that church bells may be heard ringing at the bottom. In each case a chapel is said to have stood on the banks of the water, to have been pulled down, and its bells thrown into the mere.[1] At Croesmere the bells still sound when the wind ruffles the surface of the water. At Colemere they may be heard, according to one authority, on windy nights when the moon is full,—according to another, at midnight on the anniversary of the patron saint of the chapel, whom yet another informant declares to have been St. Helen. An Ellesmere lady gives another account of the story, viz. that a monastery once stood on the ground occupied by the pool, but a spring burst forth close to it, and swelled to such a height that the waters quickly covered the monastery, and formed Colemere, beneath which the chapel bells may yet be yearly heard ringing. Another variant, taken down from the narration of the Welshampton maid-servant before quoted, runs as follows :

'They say that the old church at Colemere was pulled down by Oliver Cromwell, and the bells thrown into the mere. Once an attempt was made to get them up. Chains had been fastened to them, and twenty oxen had succeeded in drawing them to the side, when a man who had been helping said to some one who had doubted their being able to raise them, "In spite of God and the devil we have done it." At these words the chains snapped. The bells rolled

[1] The Rev. M. H. Lee of Hanmer, Flintshire, thinks that the Colemere legend may have some foundation in fact. He gives a reference to a letter from Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, dated York House, 12th August, 1613, addressed to Sir Thomas Hanmer, Knt., and Roger Puleston, Esq., two Flintshire magistrates, asking them to 'find out the contrivers and movers of the night-riot and disorders at Lyneall. . . . The preparing and plotting of the outrage to be done at two several times in the night season, with such number and multitude of men and women, some disguised, and a set hour for their meeting, with many other circumstances, could not be without some special person or deviser and settler of it.' Colemere lies within the township of Lyneal, and Mr. Lee thinks that this letter may probably refer to the wrecking of the chapel which anciently stood there, by a Puritan mob. Some good authorities point out the site of the old chapel at Lyneal itself, but it is most commonly believed to have stood on the banks of Colemere, close to a very old yew tree, which still remains, and not far from the spot where the modern district church of Colemere now stands.

back into the water. They heard the sound, and saw by the bubbles where they had settled, but they could not see anything more, nor has anything ever been seen or heard of them since.'

The following story was related by a Baschurch woman in 1879. The Berth Pool near Baschurch lies at the foot of the Berth Hill, a very curious entrenched camp on an eminence in the midst of a morass, where it was once intended to build the parish church. But the same mysterious 'something' which interfered with the building on the height also threw the bells intended for it into the Berth Pool. Horses were brought and fastened to them, but were quite powerless to draw them out. Then oxen were tried with better success; but just as the bells were coming to the surface of the water, one of the men employed in the work let slip an oath, on which they fell back, crying, 'No! never!' And they lie at the bottom of the pool to this day.[1]

Between Oswestry and Llanymynech, close beside the railway, lies a pretty little pool called Llynclys, or Llyn-y-clys, which is variously interpreted to mean 'the swallowed hall,' or 'the lake of the enclosure.' Early in this century there were many who believed that 'when the water was clear enough' the towers of a palace might be discerned at the bottom; only, as the author of the *Gossiping Guide to Wales* observes, 'unfortunately there never appears to have been a day when the water *was* clear enough.' The legend which tells of the destruction of this palace—though now, it seems, forgotten—is recorded in an old MS. history of Oswestry, preserved in the British Museum, and communicated to the present writer by Mr. Askew Roberts of Croeswylan, Oswestry, the author of the *Guide* aforesaid. It is as follows:

'About twoe miles of Oswestry within the parishe there is a poole called llynclis of which poole Humffrey Lloyd reporteth thus: German Altisiodorensis preached sometime there against the Pelagian heresie.

[1] In the notes to *Mabinogion*, Vol. I. 381, mention is made of an aquatic monster, the 'Avanc,' which exercised a mysterious influence over some tremendous inundation. Among 'the three great exploits of the Island of Britain' the 97th Triad reckons 'the horned oxen of Hugh the Mighty, which drew the Avanc of the lake to land.' The Welsh lake-fairies, when they marry mortals, always bring with them herds of water-cattle as their dowry. These legends are connected with the old Aryan belief in 'cloud-cows.'

The King whereof,[1] as is there read, because hee refused to heare that good man by the secrett & terrible iudgment of God with his pallace & all his household was swallowed up into the bowelles of the earth. Suo in loco non procul ab oswaldia est Stagnum incognite profunditatis llynclis id est vorago palatij in hunc diem dictum. In that place whereas not far from Oswestry is nowe a standing water of an unknown depth called llynclis that is the devouring of the pallace.'

The great mere at Ellesmere is the subject of many legends, or rather, variants of one legend, all bearing on the same notion of wickedness punished by a flood. Where Ellesmere stands was once as fine a stretch of meadow-land as any in the county. In a large field in the midst of it there was a well of beautiful water, from which every one in the neighbourhood used to fetch as much as they pleased. At last there was a change of tenants in the farm to which the field belonged; and the new-comer was a churlish man, who said the comers and goers trampled down his grass. So he stopped the poor people coming to the well with their cans and buckets as they had been used to do for years and years, and allowed no one to draw water there besides his own family. But no good came of such hard dealings. One morning, very soon after the people had been forbidden to come, the farmer's wife went out to the well for water, but instead of the well she found that the whole field was one great pool, and so it has remained ever since. But the farmer and all of his family who held the field after him, were obliged to pay the same rent as before, as a punishment for such unneighbourly conduct.

This is the legend as told in *Byegones* (Jan. 1874). A correspondent of *Shreds and Patches*, in 1881, picked up another version. Both are evidently genuine *folk*-tales.

'A many many years ago, clean water was very scarce in this neighbourhood.' All that could be got, was what was fetched from a beautiful well in the very middle of what is now the mere at Ellesmere. But the people to whom the land belonged were so grasping that they charged a halfpenny for every bucketful that was

[1] *Marginal Note* 'Rex Powisiæ.' Humfry Lluyd's work *Commentarioli Britannicæ descriptionis Fragmentum* was published 1572. See HARTSHORNE, *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 49.

drawn, which fell very heavy on the poor,[1] and they prayed to Heaven to take some notice of their wrongs. So the Almighty, to punish those who so oppressed the poor, caused the well to burst forth in such volumes that it flooded all the land about, and so formed the mere. And so thenceforward there was plenty of water free to all comers.

A third variant has been thus versified by the Rev. Oswald M. Feilden, Vicar of Frankton near Ellesmere.

'I've heard it said, where now so clear
The water of that silver mere,
It once was all dry ground;
And on a gentle eminence,
A cottage with a garden fence,
Which hedged it all around.

'And there resided all alone,
So runs the tale, an aged crone,
A witch, as some folks thought.
And to her home a well was near,
Whose waters were so bright and clear
By many it was sought.

'But greatly it displeased the dame
To see how all her neighbours came
Her cool clear spring to use,
And often was she heard to say
That if they came another day,
She would the well refuse.

'"Upon this little hill," said she,
"My house I built for privacy,
Which now I seek in vain:
For day by day you people come
Thronging in crowds around my home,
This water to obtain."

'But when folks laughed at what she said,
Her countenance with passion red—
She uttered this dread curse:
"Ye neighbours one and all beware!
If here to come again you dare
For you 'twill be the worse!"

'Of these her words they took no heed,
And when of water they had need

[1] A well in a field at Croxton, in the parish of Eccleshall, Staffordshire, is called the *Penny-quart Well*, because (it is said) the water from it being especially pure used to be sold at a penny a quart.

Next day, they came again.
The dame, they found, was not at home,
The well was locked,—so they had come
Their journey all in vain.

'The well was safely locked. But though
You might with bolts and bars, you know,
Prevent the water going,
One thing, forsooth, could not be done;
I mean, forbid the spring to run
And stop it overflowing.

'And all that day, as none could draw,
The water rose full two feet more
Than ever had been known:
And when the evening shadows fell,
Beneath the cover of the well
A stream was running down.

'It flowed on gently all next day,
And soon around the well there lay
A pond of water clear;
And as it ever gathered strength,
It deeper grew, until at length
The pond became a mere.

'To some, alas! the flood brought death;
Full many a cottage lies beneath
The waters of the lake;
And those who dwelt on either side
Were driven by the rising tide
Their homesteads to forsake.

'And as they fled, that parting word
Which they so heedlessly had heard,
They now recalled, I ween!
The dame was gone; but where once stood
Her cottage, still above the flood
An island may be seen.'[1]

The connection of the island in Ellesmere with the legend, is an addition of the verse-maker's. Our Welshampton authority told the

[1] Compare CROFTON CROKER, *Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*, Wright's ed., p. 215—where the flood which buried the king's palace and formed the Lough of Cork is represented as a judgment on him for shutting up the well in his court-yard from the poor, and allowing only the princess his daughter to draw water. See parallels given in note, p. 215; also in Kennedy's *Fictions of the Irish Celts*, p. 280, *et seq.* In the story of Lake Inchiquin, there given, the flood befalls the lord of a castle for breaking the condition on which he had gained his fairy wife. Compare the end of *Undine*.

story thus:—An old woman named Mrs. Ellis had a pump in her yard. She would not sell or give any water to her neighbours. One night the well overflowed, and the next morning nothing was to be seen of her or the pump. Only the large mere covered the country, which is called after her 'Elles-mere.'

It is remarkable that, while in this version the old woman is drowned as a punishment for her churlishness, in Mr. Feilden's she is the only person who escapes: indeed she appears almost in the light of a witch or malevolent goddess of the springs and floods.

There was perhaps some ancient notion that the waters and their produce ought in the nature of things to be free to all comers. Some such idea, and also a belief in some kind of powerful and easily-offended spirit dwelling in the waters, may be traced in the following rather puzzling extract from Gervase of Tilbury,[1] which was communicated by the Rev. H. B. Taylor in the belief that the meres mentioned in them were probably to be identified with Ellesmere and its neighbour Newton Mere.

'There is in England a lake which is commonly called Wlfresimere, that is, the mere of King Wlfer, which abounds with fish when all are allowed to fish in it, but when men are prevented from fishing in it, few or no fish are found in it. In the same region is Haveringemere. If a person in sailing over it calls out, "Prout Haveringemere or allethope cunthefere,"[2] a storm arises at once and swamps his boat. These words convey an insult, as if it were said to the lake, "Thou art called Haveringemere," *i. e.* Havering's mere. Both [lakes] are on the borders of Wales.'

Most of the meres are reported to be of unknown depth. If any bottom there be, no one has ever reached it. Llynclys Pool is one which has 'never a bottom to it.' 'Three cart-ropes' will not reach the bottom of the Berth Pool. Many have tried to fathom Bomere, but in vain. Though waggon-ropes were tied together and let down into it, no bottom could be found—and how should there be? when every one knows that it *has* none! Nor can it be drained. The attempt was once made, and found useless; for whatever the work-

[1] *Ot. Imp.* III. ch. lxxxviii.

[2] Read—'Prout Haveringemere, or alle tho[r]pe[s] cun the fere,' *i. e.*, Proud Haveringemere, all our thorpes (villages) do fear thee.—W. W. S.

men did in the day, was undone by some mysterious power in the night. And Miss Jackson has thus recorded a droll story current in the neighbourhood of Ellesmere. Kettlemere and Blackmere, two small meres of the Ellesmere group, lie close to one another. 'A gentleman riding down the lane which skirts them, said to a boy whom he met, "My lad, can you tell me the name of this water?" pointing towards Kettlemere. "Oh, aye, sir, it's Kettle*mar*." "How deep is it?" "Oh, it's no bottom to it, and the tother's deeper till that, sir!"'[1]

Legends of bottomless lakes, of drowned buildings, of ghostly bells sounding from beneath the water, are to be found in almost every land. I may perhaps be allowed to relate three such stories here for the sake of comparison with ours.

There is a lake near Lindenborg in Denmark, the depth of which no one has ever been able to fathom. Many years ago, a stately castle stood there, where on the eve of a holyday the servants were rioting and drinking in the absence of the family. Their lawlessness at length reached such a height that they wrapped a swine in bed-linen and placed it in their master's bed, and sent a message to the priest desiring him to come at once and administer the last sacraments to their master who lay dying. The good man, suspecting nothing, began the office, and did not discover the trick till the swine snapped the consecrated bread out of his hand, on which he fled in indignation and terror from the accursed place, leaving his book behind him. As he passed the outer gate the clock struck twelve. A great cracking and crashing was heard all over the building. The priest turned to look, and saw that the castle had sunk into the earth and the waters of the lake had burst upwards out of the ground and rushed over the place where once it stood. And while he gazed, a little stool came floating to the water's edge, bearing on it the book which he had left behind in the doomed mansion.[2]

In the Black Forest, where now we see only the waters of the Titisee, there once stood a splendid convent, but the nuns were unworthy of their sacred profession, and were proud, luxurious, and

[1] *Shropshire Word-Book*, p. 269, *s. v.* 'Mar.'

[2] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, II. 215.

drunken. One night there came an old man to the door asking alms. But the Abbess roughly refused him, despite the entreaties of the youngest novice, who was the only one to pity him. In the early morning, just as the nuns were assembled in the chapel, a mysterious flood arose and drowned them and their convent together; all but the little novice, whom the old pilgrim sought for and bore away in a boat. The towers of the convent may yet be discerned beneath the water, and whoever dives into the lake may hear the bells ringing. But no one has ever reached the bottom; the truth is, it has none. A peasant who tried to fathom it found his plumb-line jerked out of his hand, while a voice sounded in his ear, 'Measure me, and I'll measure thee!'[1]

There is no bell-tower to the church of Dambeck (in North Germany). It was built before the flood, but the tower has sunk into the lake, whence the bells used to rise up and sun themselves on St. John's Day at noon. Some children once saw them rise up so high that one of them hung the kerchief she had been washing upon one of the bells to dry. When the other bells sank again, this one was unable to move, and the children ran and told the thing in the neighbouring town of Röbel. The townsfolk came and fastened many horses to the bell, but could not draw it out, till a poor man came by and yoked his two oxen to it, saying: 'With God go poor as well as rich, all alike!' Then it was easily removed, and hung in the tower of the Neustadt Church at Röbel. It is tolled at the funeral of poor people who cannot afford to pay for the use of the other bells, but it always sounds 'Dambeck! Dambeck!'[2]

Now what article of popular faith has given rise to all these legends? Something of the notion of Divine wrath shown by sending a flood may no doubt be due to vague traditions of the Deluge, localized everywhere by the wandering nations in their onward march,

[1] SÉGUIN, *The Black Forest*, p. 287. Compare the second variant of the Bomere legend given above, and the legend of the Lake of Grandlieu near Nantes, in Thoms's *Lays and Legends (France)*, p. 67.

[2] THORPE, *Yule Tide Stories*, p. 498. See also *Northern Mythology*, III. 18. Hans Andersen has founded one of his prettiest *reveries* on the legend of the Bell Deep of Odense Au. For English 'ghosts of submerged bells,' see *Choice Notes*, p. 235, *et seq.* Welsh parallels in *British Goblins*, pp. 35, 339.

and constantly varied to suit the varying ideas and habits of different countries and generations. But the belief in bottomless pools and dwellings beneath the waters is plainly traceable to the old heathen idea of the Nether World, where lived the gods of the waters or of the mines, just as the gods of the upper air had their habitation in the clouds above. It was believed to be a real, solid, material place, easily accessible to visitors from above. So Orpheus found it; and Odin, when he took horse and rode thither to learn the fate of Baldur; and Diarmaid of the Feen, when he sought his lost love, the beautiful daughter of King Underwaves.[1] It might sometimes be reached through caverns, such as the Ogo Hole mentioned in the last chapter, but the way to it lay also through seas and lakes and bottomless pools. There is a Norfolk legend which brings out the connection between pools, bells, and the Under World very clearly. Tunstall Church in that county having been destroyed by a fire, which yet left the bells uninjured, the parson and churchwardens quarrelled for the possession of them, and meantime the Old Gentleman watched his opportunity and walked off with them. He was, however, found out and pursued by the parson, who began to exorcise him in Latin. So in his hurry he made his way through the earth to his own abode taking his booty with him. The spot where he disappeared is now a boggy pool of water called Hell Hole, on the surface of which, in summer-time, bubbles are constantly appearing.

[1] She was a maiden who came to the Feen ragged and forlorn, 'and her hair was down to her heels,' but when Diarmaid had married her she changed (like Sir Gawain's Loathly Lady) into the most beauteous woman that man ever saw. She suddenly vanished when Diarmaid had for the third time reminded her of her former condition. He took a boat and went in search of her, but the boat sank with him in the midst of the sea, 'and he had but just gone down when he saw ground, and a plain on which he could walk. He went on this land and he went on' till at last he found his lost bride, sore sick for the want of him. —See Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, Vol. III., and note on this adventure, p. 410. See also Crofton Croker's *Irish Fairy Legends*, for the adventures of the 'innocent' who dives into an enchanted lake near Limerick, and gets an offer of marriage from 'a fat fairy;' and note on them, at p. 225, Wright's edition. The oddly inconsistent notions, first, that it is bottomless, and secondly, that a town has been swallowed up in it, are found among the traditions of the Corwrion Pool at Llandegai near Bangor, the favourite abode of the Welsh water-fairies.—See *Y Cymmrodor* for October, 1881 [and *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, by T. Wright, F.S.A., 1844.—W. W. S.].

These, the folk say, are caused by the continual sinking of the bells through the water on their endless journey to the bottomless pit.[1]

Stories of visitors from the Under World appearing to mortals are exceedingly common. Two or three such have lately been picked up in Shropshire.

The White Lady of Longnor is in the habit of coming out of the Black Pool beside the road to Leebotwood. This pool is bottomless. 'Old Nancy,' a well-known Longnor worthy, was shocked and scandalized to hear that the Parson's children had been so foolhardy as to skate on it in the recent hard winters. The White Lady issues out of it at night and wanders about the roads. Hughes, the 'Parson's man' at Longnor, met her once as he was going over the narrow foot-bridge beside the ford over Longnor Brook. 'I sid 'er a-cummin,' he said (June 1881), 'an' I thinks, 'ere's a nice young wench. Well, thinks I, who she be, I'll gi'e 'er a fright. I was a young fellow then, yo' known—an' I waited till 'er come close up to me, right i' the middle o' the bridge, an' I stretched out my arms, *so*—an' I clasped 'er in 'em, tight—*so*. An' theer was nothin'!'

'She come down here to the Villa wunst,' he continued, after a dramatic pause. 'It was when there was a public kep' here.[2] Joe Wigley, he told me. There was a great party held in the garden, and he was playing the fiddle. And they were all *daincin'*, and she come an' dainced, all in white. And every one was saying, "What a nice young 'ooman—Here's the one for me—I'll 'ave a dainee ŏŏth 'er"—and so on, like that. And she dainced and dainced ŏŏth 'em, round i' the ring, but they could'n niver ketch 'out on 'er 'and. And at last she disappeart of a sudden, and then they found out

[1] *Choice Notes*, p. 235. Sir Walter Scott says that in Scotland wells and pits on the tops of high hills are supposed to lead to the underground country of the Fairies.—*Border Minstrelsy*, II. 125.

[2] 'A great place the Villa was for drinkin' and *randyvowin'* [= rendez-vousing, by which she appeared to mean rioting], 'and once there was a fight there, and a man killed, and they say as he comes again too, in the road there,' said old Nancy. (I regret to say that I can only reproduce a sort of faint reflection of the dialect of both speakers.) Nancy when questioned about ghosts replied at first, 'Eh, bless ye, theer's no sich things!' and Hughes prefaced his histories with the assertion that 'folks made a deal o' talk, but *he'd* niver sid nothin'.' Patient listening, however, did wonders in both cases, as indeed it generally does in Folk-lore questing.

who it 'ad bin, as 'ad bin daincin' along ŏŏth 'em. And they all went off in a despert hurry, and there was niver no daincing there no more.'

Old Nancy declared that this shadowy fair one was the ghost of a lady 'as 'ad bin disapp'inted,' and had drowned herself in the Black Pool. But 'White Ladies' has been a name for the fairies from the days of the romance of Hereward, and the dancing 'round in the ring' points out very clearly the class of beings among which the lady of the Black Pool should be placed.

In like manner the 'White Lady of Kilsall,' who haunts the Dark Walk beside the pool in the grounds of that old-fashioned mansion, is said to be the ghost of one of the Whiston family, who were owners of Kilsall (near Albrighton) in the time of Elizabeth, and whose name is still preserved in that of 'Whiston's Cross,' in the same neighbourhood.[1]

The same class of beings seems to be referred to in the name of the Ladies' (or Lady's) Walk at Ellesmere. This is a paved causeway running far into the mere, with which, more than forty years ago, old swimmers were well acquainted. It could be traced by bathers until they got out of their depth. How much farther it might run they of course knew not. Its existence seems to have been almost forgotten, until in 1879 some divers, searching for the body of a drowned man, came upon it at the bottom of the mere, and this led to old inhabitants mentioning their knowledge of it.[2]

Sir Walter Scott showed his usual accuracy in matters of Folk Lore when he named the gentle water-spirit in the 'Monastery' the 'White Lady of Avenel.'

Seldom, however, are the inhabitants of the waters so harmless as our White Ladies. From the time of Odysseus and the Sirens, the sweet-voiced water-maidens have been dangerous to man. Every one knows that 'schönste Jungfrau,' the deceitful Lorelei of the Rhine, and the 'fair pretty maid with a comb and a glass in her

[1] There is a haunted room at Kilsall, which is, in part, a half-timbered building, as old as Elizabeth's time, and contains some remnants of 'wattle-and-dab' plastering.

[2] See the volume of *Byegones* for 1879. The correspondents who give this account are both old inhabitants of Ellesmere, and in a position to know the circumstances.

hand,' a sight of whom bodes evil to the British sailor. There is perhaps scarcely a sea-coast in the world which could not furnish some legend or superstition of the kind, but it is somewhat startling to find a mermaid in the midst of inland Shropshire. Here, however, is the story of 'the Child's Ercall Marmed,' heard in 1879 by Mr. T. P. Marshall of Market Drayton, from some old people at Child's Ercall, who told it 'in all sincerity, believing it to be true.'

It may interest some readers to see it in its native North-East Shropshire dialect, which differs considerably from that of West Shropshire, in which 'The Bŏŏgies and the Saut-box' was related.

'Naw, Ah nivir 'eerd tell as anny think 'ad bin sin o' leate 'eers, but theer *was* a marmed seed theer *wonst*. It was a good bit agoo, afore moy toime. Ah darsee as it 'ud be a 'underd 'ears back. Theer wuz two chaps a-gooin' to woork won mornin' early, an' they'd 'n raught as fur as the pit soide in Mr. —'s faild, an' they seed summat a-squattin' atop o' the waëter as did skear 'em above a bit! Eh, they thought as 'ow it were gooin' to tek 'em roight streat off to th' Owd Lad 'is-sen! Well, Ah conna jŏŏst seä ezackly what it were loike.—Ah wunna theer, yo' known—but it were a marmed, saëm as yo' readen on i' the paëpers. The chaps 'ad loike to 'a runned awea at the first, they wun that skeared, but as soon's iver the marmed spoken to 'em, they niver thoughten no moor o' that. 'Er v'ice was se swate an' se pleasant, they fell'n in lŏŏve wi' 'er theer an' then, the both on 'em. Well, an' 'er towd 'em as 'ow theer wuz a treasure 'id at the bottom o' the pit, lŏŏmps o' gowd, an' dear knows what. An 'er 'd give 'em all as iver they loiked if se be as they 'd 'n cŏŏm to 'er i' the waëter an' tek it out of 'er 'ands. So they wenten in—welly up to their chins it were—an 'er dowked down i' the waëter an' brought ŏŏp a lŏŏmp o' gowd, as big as a mon's yed, very near. An' the chaps wun jŏŏst a-gooin' to tek it off 'er, an' the won on 'em sez, "Eh," sez 'e, (an' swore, yo' known) "if this inna a bit o' luck!" An', moy woord! if the marmed didna tek it off 'em agen, an give a koind of a skroike, an' dowked down agen into the pit, an' they niver seed no moor on 'er, not a'ter; nor got none o' the gowd; nor nobody's niver seed nothink on 'er, not sence.'

In more ordinary colloquial English it runs as follows:

'No, I never heard that anything had been seen of late years, but there *was* a mermaid seen there *once*. It was a good while ago, before my time. I dare say it might be a hundred years ago. There were two men going to work early one morning, and they had got as far as the side of the pond in Mr. —'s field, and they saw something on the top of the water which scared them not a little. They thought it was going to take them straight off to the *Old Lad* himself! I can't say exactly what it was like, I wasn't there, you know! but it was a mermaid, the same as you read of in the papers. The fellows had almost run away at first, they were so frightened, but as soon as the mermaid had spoken to them, they thought no more of that. Her voice was so sweet and so pleasant that they fell in love with her there and then, both of them. Well, she told them that there was a treasure hidden at the bottom of the pond—lumps of gold, and no one knows what. And she would give them as much as ever they liked if they would come to her in the water and take it out of her hands. So they went in, though it was almost up to their chins, and she dived down into the water and brought up a lump of gold almost as big as a man's head. And the men were just going to take it when one of them said, "Eh!" he said, (and swore, you know), "if this isn't a bit of luck!" And, my word! if the mermaid didn't take it away from them again, and gave a scream, and dived down into the pond, and they saw no more of her and got none of her gold. And nobody has ever seen her since then.'

No doubt the story once ran, that the oath which scared the uncanny creature involved the mention of a Holy Name.

'Jenny Greenteeth' is the name of a water-witch who has none of the outward charms of the mermaid. She is an old woman who lurks beneath the green weeds which cover stagnant ponds, and Ellesmere children are warned that if they venture too near the edge of such places, she will stretch out her long arms and drag them in to her.[1]

Quite a different type of water-dweller from all we have hitherto met with, appears in the legend of the Monster Fish of Bomere Pool.

[1] The same thing used to be said in Lancashire in my mother's childhood. See HENDERSON, *Folk Lore of the Northern Counties*, 2nd edition, p. 265. The male Nixes of Germany have *green teeth*. KEIGHTLEY, *Fairy Mythology*, p. 258.

He of course lives *in* the mere, not *beneath* it like the water-witches. He is bigger than any fish that ever swam, he wears a sword by his side, and no man can catch him. It was tried once. A great net was brought, and he was entangled in it and brought nearly to the side, but he drew his sword and cut the net and escaped. Then the fishermen made a net of iron links and caught him in that. This time he was fairly brought to land, but again he freed himself with his wonderful sword, and slid back into the water and got away. The people were so terrified at the strange sight that they have never tried to take him again, though he has often been seen since, basking in the shallow parts of the pool with the sword still girded round him. One day, however, he will give it up, but not until the right heir of Condover Hall shall come and take it from him. He will yield it easily then, but no one else can take it. For it is no other than Wild Edric's sword, which was committed to the fish's keeping when he vanished, and will never be restored except to his lawful heir. Wild Edric, they say, was born at Condover Hall, and it ought to belong to his family now, but his children were defrauded of their inheritance, and that is why there is no luck about the Hall to this day. This curse has been on it ever since then. Every time the property changes hands the new landlord will never receive the rents twice;—and those who have studied history will tell you that this has always come to pass.

This tradition was related in Condover parish in 1881. It may be as well to observe, first, that Condover never belonged to Wild Edric at all, as Domesday Book shows, where it is entered as having been royal property before the Conquest. Secondly, that though the Condover estate has seldom passed in the direct line from father to son, especially of late years, yet it has been in the hands of one family since the days of Elizabeth.[1] But the notion that there is 'no luck'

[1] Nevertheless it is curious, that though Condover itself never belonged to Edric, yet Bayston, which is a part of Condover parish (now a separate ecclesiastical district) running down to one side of Bomere, was in Edward the Confessor's time held by Edric under the Bishop of Hereford. Moreover, Domesday Book records a dispute between the Bishop of Hereford and the Norman William Pantulf, who succeeded Edric, about the manor of Bayston, in which the Bishop appears to have been successful.—See EYTON'S *Antiquities of Shropshire*, VI. 298.

about Condover Hall is commonly current, though I have only once heard it accounted for as above.

The editor of the *Shrewsbury Journal* communicated to *Shreds and Patches* (November 25, 1874) another story, which seems a later and, so to speak, rationalistic version of the legend of the Monster Fish, but even this cannot be very modern.

'Some two centuries ago, or less, a party of gentlemen, including the Squire [of Condover], were fishing in the pool, when an enormous fish was captured and hauled into the boat. Some discussion arose as to the girth of the fish, and a bet was made that he was bigger round than the squire, and that the sword-belt of the latter would not reach round his waist. To decide the bet the squire unbuckled his belt, which was there and then with some difficulty fastened round the body of the fish. The scaly knight (for so he no doubt felt himself to be) being girt with the sword, began to feel impatience at being kept so long out of his native element, and after divers struggles he succeeded in eluding his captors, and regaining at the same time his freedom and his watery home, carrying the squire's sword with him.'[1]

The sword which is to prove the hero's claim is a very ancient 'property' of legendary tales. Theseus showed to his unknown father, as the tokens of his parentage, the sword and sandals which had lain buried under a great stone in Trœzene until he had attained age and strength to lift it. In a Breton romance, the *Lai d'Ywenec*,[2] the father's throne is kept empty until his son is fully grown, when his mother brings forth the sword entrusted to her years before, to

[1] Mr. Wright, who tells of the existence of the fish and of his attempted capture, does not seem to have been acquainted with either of these legends. He adds the detail that the monster occupies himself with ringing a bell, which is heard more often than the bell of the church, and compares the armed fish with the Grendel slain by our English mythic hero Beowulf: the water-monster dwelling in a cavern beneath the lake, where the hero descending, found stores of swords and weapons. Kemble (*Saxons in England*, II. 378) mentions places in England anciently bearing the names of Grindles pyt, Grindles bece (= batch or beck), and Grendles mere.

Sculptured stones are found in Scotland bearing the figure of a fish, accompanied not only by swords, but by the mermaid-emblems of the comb and looking-glass (CAMPBELL'S *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, III. 338).

[2] KEIGHTLEY, *Fairy Mythology*, p. 422.

prove his parentage. And King Arthur, with whose legend we have already seen that that of Wild Edric has much in common, established his claim as the rightful heir to the throne by proving himself the only man able to draw a sword out of the stone in which it was fixed. Nor can we fail to remember the story of his other and more famous sword Excalibur—how

> 'One summer noon, an arm
> Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
> Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
> Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
> And took it, and have worn it, like a king,'

and how in the dark days, when the hero's course was run, his last faithful friend at his bidding threw the sword once more into the depths, and summoned to his help the Lady of the Lake, who bore him away with her to her hidden realm of Avalon.

CHAPTER IX.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

CONCERNING HIDDEN TREASURES.

"This is fairy gold, boy; and 't will prove so."
Winter's Tale, Act III. Sc. iii.

THERE is but little on this head to be found among the Shropshire legends of the present day. For a really complete local story of the kind we must go back to the fourteenth century and the chronicle of Thomas of Walsingham. 'In the year 1344,' he says, 'a certain Saracen physician came to Earl Warren to ask permission to kill a serpent or dragon which had its den at Bromfield [near Ludlow], and was committing great ravages in the Earl's lands in the borders of Wales. The Earl consented, and the dragon was overcome by the incantations of the Arab; but certain words which he had dropped led to the belief that a large treasure lay hid in the dragon's den. Some men of Herefordshire, hearing of this, went by night at the instigation of a Lombard named Peter Picard to dig for the gold, and they had just reached it when the retainers of the Earl Warren, having discovered what was going on, fell suddenly upon them, threw them into prison,' and took possession of the hoard for the Earl.[1]

Some mention of secret treasures is, however, to be found in several of our legends: notably, in that of the Giants of Stokesay, whose riches are still safe in the locked chest deep in the vaults of the Castle—or, as the story is otherwise told, underneath the moat. Here the guardian, instead of a dragon, is a raven, also an appropriate

[1] WRIGHT, *History of Ludlow*, ed. 1852, p. 28.

warder in mythological story.[1] The Mermaid at Child's Ercall, again, keeps treasures at the bottom of her 'pit,' and we shall presently come to the story of 'Blount's Ghost,' who used formerly to rise out of a pool at Kinlet and keep such close guard over the cellars under the Old Hall, that though it has been pulled down for the last hundred and fifty years, yet to this day no one dares venture into them though they are full of bottles of wine and spirits, and hogsheads of ale and beer.

The indefatigable Mr. Wright records a tradition picked up at our famous 'buried city' of Uriconium, to the effect that on the northern side of Watling Street, not far from the place where it crosses the Bell Brook, there is near the brook-side a *buried well*, at the bottom of which vast treasures lie hidden. As a local rhyme expresses it,

> 'Near the brook of Bell
> There is a well
> Which is richer than any man can tell.'

It is observable that in all but one of these stories the treasure lies beneath *water*. This is a common feature in treasure-legends. The famous Hoard of the Nibelung consisted of the treasure extorted by Loki from Andvari the dwarf of the waterfall. Andvari laid this curse upon it, that it should prove the bane of its owners for ever. The gods paid it as the price of the blood of Hreidmar's son Ottur whom Loki had slain. Fafnir, another of Hreidmar's sons, murdered his father to obtain possession of it, and watched over his ill-gotten gains in the guise of a serpent or dragon until Sigurd slew him in his turn.

The 'white ladies'[2] who dwell in the wells, lakes, and seas of so many countries are owners of vast treasures, which they offer to mortal visitors. Sometimes, as in the cases of Melusina and the Mermaids, they have partly the form of serpents or fishes; sometimes a seeming dragon demands three kisses from the hero, which being paid, she returns to her former shape as a beautiful woman.

[1] See instances in *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, ed. 1879, ch. x. p. 320.

[2] GRIMM, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 921.

'The worm leapt out, the worm leapt down,
She plaited nine times round stock and stone.
And aye as the boat came to the beach,
She struck and banged it off again . . . .

'He's louted him o'er the lofty crag,
And he has gi'en her kisses three;
In she swang a loathly worm,
And out she stepped a fair ladye.'[1]

Comparative mythologists explain the connection between water and hidden treasures by reference to early myths which describe the golden light of the sun hidden behind the dark rain-clouds, whose forms seemed at different times to be those of rocks, fountains, dragons, and giant birds with outstretched wings.[2]

Real events have no doubt often helped to fix the scenes of these legends in various places. Mr. Wright considers that some deposit of ancient coins found in one of the barrows in the 'Old Field' near Ludlow may have given rise to the legend told by Thomas of Walsingham. And the 'dinders'[3] and other Roman relics so often found about Uriconium have doubtless attracted the treasure-well legend thither.

There is another class of traditions connected in reality, though not very obviously, with the 'buried treasure' myth; namely, the common belief in mysterious underground passages beneath the ruins of castles and abbeys of bygone days.

Over against the picturesque old town of Bridgnorth, a stone's throw from the high road to Worfield, are some caves in the side of one of the ruddy sandstone cliffs overlooking the Severn, once used (one of them still used) for human habitation. One of these, now empty and deserted, is known as the Hermitage. Here the rock has been smoothed and shaped into rounded arches, and there are evident traces of a little oratory or chapel, communicating by a well-preserved flight of steps with the upper chamber of the cave. There is documentary evidence to show that this cave has really been occupied as a hermitage, and the local tradition that it was first inhabited by a

[1] 'Kempion' in ALLINGHAM'S *Ballad Book*, Golden Treasury Series, p. 72. *Border Minstrelsy*, Vol. III., note at p. 15.

[2] BARING-GOULD, *Curious Myths*, 2nd Series, p. 41.

[3] Dinders = denarii, locally used for any Roman coins.

brother of King Athelstan gains some support from its ancient name of the Hermitage of *Athelardeston* in the forest of Morfe.[1] Another and very persistent tradition declares, that beneath a certain spot in the floor of the cave is the entrance to an underground passage, which leads to *a chest of buried treasure*, and thence going 'right under Sivern,' finally emerges—authorities are not agreed where! Some say in the extensive cellars of the old mansion at Hord's Park, some say in the Whitefriars at Bridgnorth, where also underground vaults existed; others say in Bridgnorth Castle. But wherever it went to, the passage went right under 'Sivern.'

So strong was the general belief in the existence of a passage of some sort, that in the summer of 1878 Mr. Hubert Smith of Bridgnorth determined to have the truth of the tradition tested. Under his directions the floor of the cave was dug out until the solid rock was reached, but no trace of any such passage could be found.[2] In June, 1881, when I visited the hermitage (one of the loveliest spots I have ever seen), the good woman who lived in the adjoining cave pointed out the disturbed state of the sandy soil which forms the floor of the chapel, saying that her husband had dug it 'over and over' in search of the mouth of the passage, but in vain.

A like tradition prevails in many other places. An underground passage is said to connect Shrewsbury Castle with the Lyth Hill, on which tradition declares that Cromwell posted his army to bombard the town.[3] Another passage is said to have run from the house of the Austin Friars, in Shrewsbury, to the Benedictine Abbey of Holy Cross, without the walls. The Abbey, so the folk say, was connected with St. Mary's, the principal parish church of the town, by another such passage, and by yet another with the monastery of the Austin Canons at Haughmond. In every one of these cases, the supposed passage must have run *under the Severn*. An intelligent and well-

[1] EYTON, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, Vol. I. p. 352.

[2] I gather these particulars from an interesting little account of the hermitage, written by my kind correspondent, Mr. Smith, for the *Reliquary*, October, 1878, and republished by Bemrose.

[3] Shrewsbury was not bombarded, but surprised, and captured without bloodshed by the Parliamentary forces under Colonels Mytton and Reinkens, before daybreak on the 22nd February, 1644-5.—OWEN AND BLAKEWAY, *History of Shrewsbury*, Vol. I. 450.

educated man, who told me of the last-mentioned, expressly declared that it had done so.

Another passage is said to have connected Haughmond Abbey with High Ercall. This must have passed under the little river Roden. A young woman lately assured me, that when her sister was living in service at the old hall, which stands beside the ecclesiastical-looking ruins of a still older mansion at High Ercall, the entrance to this passage was discovered. It led to cellars full of barrels of ale and bottles of wine, as good as the day they were stored there, which 'the master' gave to the men who discovered them. They found that it went on a long, long way, but after some time the men were afraid to follow it any further, and the entrance to it was filled up again. This (if it ever happened at all!) must have taken place no longer ago than 1870 at most.[1]

Lilleshall Abbey too had its underground passage. This was supposed to lead to Longford Hall, three or four miles away. The village talk goes, that though nobody now can point out the site of the entrance, yet within the memory of old people it was open and easily accessible. One old man, who died not many years since, used to tell how a young heifer once went down it, and wandered so far that the men dared not follow her, but came back leaving her in the depths. But the story ended rather tamely, by saying that after a while the heifer came back the same way of her own accord.[2]

Sometimes, no doubt, there was some sort of foundation for the tradition. Thus, the Cluniac monks of Wenlock Priory are said to have had an underground communication with the Cistercian establishment of Buildwas Abbey. (Again the Severn lies between the two places!) And though it is in the highest degree unlikely that any

[1] A number of silver coins were really found in levelling a mound at Ercall Hall, some few years before 1851. The greater part of them were of Charles I.'s time. No doubt they were hidden there when the house was garrisoned by the Royalists during the Civil Wars.—BAGSHAWE'S *Shropshire Directory*.

[2] There is no river between Longford and Lilleshall, only one or two insignificant little brooks. The gentleman who told me the above story writes, 'I remember when I was a boy at school, at Wakefield, tradition said that a passage ran from Sandal Castle to Wakefield Church. It would have to pass under the river Calder. The distance would be nearly two miles, or perhaps a mile and a half.'

such connection existed between two rival orders, yet a subterranean passage has really been discovered at Buildwas of late years. It is well described in the following extract from a paper on 'Abbey Ruins of the Severn Valley,' by H. H. Dale, read at a meeting of the Liverpool Architectural and Archæological Society in 1867.

'In the description of this abbey given by the old topographers, mention is made of a subterranean passage near the abbey, but almost all the recent writers upon the subject have discredited this tradition, and even the local antiquaries seem to be totally ignorant of the existence of such an underground passage at this place; they may now, however, satisfy themselves about the matter by a personal examination upon the spot, as we ourselves did. It would appear that recently a heavily-laden cart or waggon, on passing over the court adjoining the abbot's house, by its weight caused the arch which covered this passage to give way; and on moving the *débris* it was discovered that a considerable length of this so-called fabulous subway could be actually traced. On expressing a desire to see it to one of the workmen engaged upon some repairs at the abbot's house, he procured a ladder and candle, and on following him through a trap-door, after going about fifteen feet down a vertical brick shaft, we found ourselves in this veritable tunnel. It appeared about ten feet in height, and four feet in width, formed of excellent squared masonry, with a semi-circular arched covering of well-keyed ashlar. We followed it for about fifty yards, our further progress being impeded by soil and the *débris* of fallen stonework. We noticed one rather puzzling feature, viz. the existence of a bold jutting stone corbel, at about six feet from the floor level—the only practical purpose which it could have here served, as it appeared to us, being that of a bracket for holding a lamp to light the passage.'

The Rev. W. A. Leighton, of Shrewsbury (no mean authority), writes that 'subterranean chambers, etc., about monasteries were used for stowing in security the title-deeds and treasures of the county families.' If so, it is easy to see how such stories as we have been considering attached themselves more especially to religious houses. They seem to show us the light in which the monks were regarded by the common people; as a race apart, of great wealth, mysterious

habits, skill, and learning beyond those of mankind at large—in fact, the very class of whom and of whose abodes marvellous legends were likely to be related.

Mr. Wright, in the paper so often quoted, has a very different kind of story of buried treasures. He says, that it is believed near Bishop's Castle that money buried in a certain spot of ground there, will in due time be found doubled. A miserly old man, who wished to buy a plot of ground, and had but half the price, was persuaded by a cunning acquaintance to try this plan, which the latter declared had once succeeded in his own case. The foolish old fellow took the treacherous advice, and on going at the prescribed time, viz. 'the same minute of the following month,' to dig up the money, he found his forty sovereigns exchanged for eighty brass buttons! But his friend had disappeared altogether!

One would like to know whether this faithless adviser was one of the gipsy tribe; for this is no other than the gipsy hoax known as the *Bori Hokani*, or Great Trick. It seems to have been well known to the tribe whose doings are told of *In Gipsy Tents*, and one of whose favourite haunts was the county of Salop.[1] It is generally practised by making the dupe believe that the gipsy knows some charm which will 'make money breed money.' The poor creature—probably the wife of some farmer too ignorant to trust money to the keeping of a Bank—brings out the family store of sovereigns: the gipsy packs them in a parcel, murmurs some words over them, and returns to the dupe—not the money, but an exactly similar parcel, filled with bits of lead, and substituted for the valuable one by sleight of hand. Then, with orders that the parcel is to be locked up and left untouched for a certain length of time, at the end of which there will be two sovereigns for every one put into it,—the gipsy decamps, and is far away before the cheat is discovered.

[1] GROOME, *In Gipsy Tents*, p. 357.

CHAPTER X.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

CONCERNING NAMES AND PLACES.

"Gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."
Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V. Sc. i.

IT constantly happens, and perhaps especially among the English race, that uncouth-sounding foreign names are changed in daily speech into something more nearly resembling the vulgar tongue, both in sound and spelling. Thus the Welsh town of Barmouth is in reality Aber Mawddach; the Old Man of Coniston is the 'Alt Maen,' or High Rock. In Shropshire, Brogyntyn, near Oswestry, the seat of Lord Harlech, was for many years known as Porkington, and has only of late returned to its original name. And I have seen a country blacksmith's bill, in which the shoeing of an Irish horse called Usquebaugh was entered again and again as 'four shoes *Huskyball!*' Now if we imagine the devisers of such a piece of 'Volksetymologie' (as the Germans call it) as this, going one step farther, and speculating on the meaning of such a name as Husky Ball and the reasons why the horse should have been so called, we shall have a very good idea of the way in which legends are almost invariably formed, viz. in the attempt to account for the existence of something—be it name, custom, superstition, or what not—'not understanded of the people' among whom the legend takes shape. The 'folk-etymologists' *have* taken this 'one step farther' about the names of a good many places in Shropshire, as we will proceed to show.

On the banks of the river Teme, near Bromfield Vicarage, opposite to Oakley Park, there is a beautiful piece of meadow land, in which some remains of a moated house may be seen. The field is called *Crawls*, and it is not very long since many people in and about Bromfield could recite a ballad telling the story of the name; but when the lady to whom we are indebted for these particulars tried to obtain the ballad for the benefit of Mr. Wright's often-quoted paper in *Collectanea Archæologica*, no one could repeat more than a few isolated lines, though the incidents of the story were still clearly remembered as follows:

Many hundred years ago there was a young lady, her father's only daughter and heiress, whom a gallant knight wooed and sought for his bride. And she loved him well and gave him her promise. But when her father came to hear of it he would by no means give his consent, for the knight was a younger son, and landless. The young lady, though, was firm, and held to her word. One day she came and told her father that she and her true love would be married the next morning at Bromfield church. The father was angry, as he might well be. He upbraided her for a headstrong lass, who must e'en take her own way, but of all his broad lands he vowed she should have none but what she could crawl round by morning light. She said not a word, but went quietly away. An old servant brought her a pair of leathern breeches to guard her poor knees ('else they would ha' wore out'), and thus strangely equipped, she crawled around the fields all through that dark cold winter's night, and came in covered with mud to her father at his breakfast, saying that she had taken him at his word, and crawled round so much fair meadow land as reached nearly to Downton. The old man was so much delighted at his girl's brave spirit that he forgave her obstinacy, and took her back into favour. He made her heiress of all his estates, which continued to belong to her descendants for many generations, and the land she crept round during that long dreary night still bears the name of 'Crawls.'

Readers of the famous 'Tichborne Case' will remember the Hampshire legend frequently mentioned in it, and commemorated in a picture at Tichborne. How Lady Mabel Tichborne, a weakly,

half-crippled invalid, won her stern husband's promise to devote to charitable purposes so much land as she could crawl round on hands and knees, and how the annual proceeds of the field thus obtained, and called 'Crawls,' were given in doles to the poor every Lady Day.

The stories of 'Crawls' remind one of the stratagem of the bullock's hide cut into thongs, by means of which Dido obtained the site of Carthage, and Hengist and Horsa (according to Geoffrey of Monmouth!) that of *Tong*—i.e. *Thong*—Castle in Kent. It has been said, but on no good authority, so far as the present writer can ascertain, that the same story was formerly told of Tong Castle in Shropshire.[1]

Haughmond Hill, near Shrewsbury—'yon bosky hill'—overlooking Battlefield, where Falstaff 'fought an hour by Shrewsbury clock,'[2] is the subject of another etymological legend, well known in the neighbourhood, and thus told by an Edgmond woman, 1873. (It must be explained that the name of the hill is pronounced *Haymond;* by the uneducated, '*Aymon*'.)

'The time as the battle was, down by theer, the Queen was roidin' awee fro' the battle—I suppose it 'ud be Queen Mary. And her'd gotten her horse's shoes turned backerts, as folks shouldna know the wee [way] as her'd gone. And she was gooin' up the hill, and theer cŏŏm a mon, and he says to her, "Well, missis," he says, "and how's the battle gettin' on?" And she answered him nothin' but, "*Eh, mon!*" her says, jŏŏst loike that, "Eh, mon!" and niver said no moor, because her was froightened loike, at him speakin' to her; and so the hill come to be called Aimun 'Ill. It was an owd labourin' mon as towd may. We wun three on us

[1] For parallel legends see J. M. KEMBLE, *Saxons in England*, I. 17.

[2] The accuracy of Shakspeare's local details concerning the Battle of Shrewsbury has often been remarked upon. 'Shrewsbury clock' is without doubt the clock in the Guildhall which told the moon's changes, set up in 1592, five years before the publication of the play. It is, of course, very possible that Shakspeare may have visited Shrewsbury among one or other of the companies of players who from time to time performed in the town. But he must have had another means of knowing the details of the neighbourhood, viz. from the conversation of 'Dick Tarleton,' the famous comic actor, who was a native of Condover, and was still living when Shakspeare went up to London; Tarleton, moreover, had taken a part in the elder play of Henry IV.

gooin' to Sosebry, and we said, What was that place? So then he towd us. An owd labourin' mon he were, as looked as if he might ha' bin workin' theer all his loife."

Another variant of the story is as follows. Queen Anne stood under a group of fir trees on the top of Haughmond Hill (called after her Queen Anne's Bower) watching the battle on the plain below. At one time she thought it would go in the King's favour, so she jumped up and clapped her hands, crying,—

'Amen!
The battle's won!'

And that is how the hill came to get its name. ('Only I suppose, said (in 1879) a young man who had learnt the story when as a boy he and his schoolfellows played and scrambled about upon the hill, 'she must have said "*Ah*-men," for they call it *Awmon* 'ill now-a-days.' Aumon or Hawmond is the modern 'refined' pronunciation.)

But the Queen rejoiced too soon, for the day went against her side after all, and she presently had to take to flight. She made her way down to the blacksmith's at Uffington, and got him to turn her horse's shoes backwards. Then as she mounted again she drew out her pistol and shot the man dead, lest he should betray her, and so made her escape.[1]

This legend is a curious instance of the way in which tradition travesties real facts, and a whole crop of error springs from a single grain of historical truth. We all know that there *was* a battle of Shrewsbury, but we know also that the Royalist side were winners, not losers, as represented in the legend. Nevertheless, the fate of the

[1] At Muckleston in Staffordshire they say that Queen Margaret watched the progress of the battle of Blore Heath from the top of the church tower, and that one Skelhorne, the ancestor of the present village blacksmith of that name, reversed her horse's shoes (but without meeting so tragical a fate in return) to enable her to escape unsuspected to the Bishop of Lichfield's castle at Eccleshall. Reversing a horse's shoes was a common trick in mediæval history—or fiction.

"Lord Mangerton them orders gave,
Your horses the wrang way maun be shod."
Border Minstrelsy, I. 230.

Hereward, Eustace the Monk, Robert Bruce, Alfonso VI. of Castile, and Queen Margaret of Denmark, are all said to have resorted to this stratagem; and two other instances in Shropshire itself were mentioned in our second chapter.

day was at first doubtful. It seemed at one time as though the rebels would gain the victory, but the tide shortly afterwards turned; and it appears that the defeated party did actually take flight over Haughmond Hill and through Uffington, as described in our story.[1]

The Civil Wars of the seventeenth century are still remembered in popular traditions, but in a very confused fashion. Oliver Cromwell is of course credited with having led every troop of horse in person, and much is laid to his door of which he was utterly guiltless. A droll instance of this was related to me on the Wrekin in 1881. I inquired the reason of the names 'Heaven Gate' and 'Hell Gate' applied to the gateway openings in the ancient British encampment which is distinctly traceable upon the Wrekin.[2] 'Well, you know,' I was told, 'there was fighting upon the Wrekin in old times. It was in Cromwell's time, when they battered down the Abbeys—Wenlock, and Buildwas, and Haughmond, and Lilleshall, and Wroxeter, (Uriconium, as they call it.) And they had a battle upon the Wrekin, and at first they lost, and so they called it Hell Gate. And they were forced to go further up, and they made a stand again, and this time they won, so they called that place Heaven Gate, because they won the battle there.'[3]

Another etymological story comes to us from the three Strettons—the quaint little market town of Church Stretton and its two attend-

[1] OWEN AND BLAKEWAY, *History of Shrewsbury*, I. 193. The Queen in 1403 was Joan of Navarre, Henry IV.'s second wife, to whom he had been married three months before the date of the battle. There is no evidence that she was present with the army on this occasion.

[2] See HARTSHORNE, *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 90.

[3] The *Folk-Lore Traditions of Historical Events*, to which the Rev. W. S. Lach-Szyrma draws attention in Vol. III. Part 2 of the *Folk-Lore Record*, are plentifully illustrated in this chapter, and in the *Legends of Popular Heroes* and *Wild Edric*. An anecdote of Richard III. will be found among *Birth Superstitions*. Had my attention been earlier called to Mr. Lach-Szyrma's interesting paper, these might have been all placed in juxtaposition.

On the steepest face of the Caradoc is a cave called Caractacus' Hole, where the people declare 'the King' hid from his enemies after his defeat. 'Old Nancy' said that Caractacus's camp on the Caradoc was a barrack for the soldiers 'in the wărs,' and that the Moat Farm in Longnor was the storehouse for their provisions. Certain indented marks on the walls of Edgmond Church and churchyard were in my childhood laid to the charge of 'Cromwell's soldiers sharpening their swords.' It has been suggested that they were made by sharpening arrow-heads, in the days when archery was practised in churchyards.

ant hamlets, nestling at the base of the Longmynd beside the Watling Street, from which they take their name. King James II. was once upon a time travelling from Ludlow to Shrewsbury, and he came to a little village; so he stopped and asked the people what was its name. 'Stretton, your Majesty,' they told him. 'Stretton,' he said, 'it's a very *little* Stretton, I think,' and so it got the name of Little Stretton. So he went a little further, and he came to a town, and there they stopped to bait the horses. The King asked what was the name of the town. 'It's Stretton, your Majesty,' they said. 'Oh, I suppose that must be *Church* Stretton,' he said, 'as I see you have got a church here.' And Church Stretton they have called it ever since. Then the King set out again, and soon he came to another village, and he asked what the name of this one might be. 'It's Stretton, your Majesty,' the people said. 'Stretton!' said the King, 'why they're *all* Strettons in this part of the country, I think!' so that's how All Stretton got its name. The 'grain of historical truth' here, is, that James II. really did travel from Ludlow to Shrewsbury A.D. 1687.[1]

Gobowen, the place where the Oswestry junction on the Shrewsbury and Chester railway is situated, is said to take its name from the following story. In former times a man named Bowen lived there, and carried on the trade of a blacksmith. One day a Cockney, who was riding past, stopped at Bowen's forge to get a new shoe for his horse, which had lost one on the journey. Bowen of course asked the man to get off, but the Cockney said his horse was so troublesome to mount that he should be very glad if the smith could replace the shoe while he was on its back. Bowen consented to this, and hammered away at the horse's hoof for some time. Then civilly touching his hat, he told the rider the job was done, and asked for a shilling in payment. The other, instead of giving him anything, put spurs to his horse and galloped away, crying, 'There's a Cockney's

[1] OWEN AND BLAKEWAY, *History of Shrewsbury*, Vol. I. 496, where it is pointed out that the true derivation of the name *All* Stretton is *Ald* or *Old* Stretton. It lies nearest to the Watling Street of the three villages. This story is a genuine *folk-tale*, although it has found its way into a county history. I first heard it in my childhood, from a very illiterate nursemaid, who came from one of the lonely hill-farms on the outskirts of the Longmynd.

trick for you.' But the blacksmith, not to be outdone, held up the shoe, which all the time he had only pretended to fasten, and called out, 'And here is Go-y-Bowen's trick for you.' And so the place was called *Go-y-Bowen*, or Bowen the smith. It has been pointed out by Welsh scholars that the framers of this story cannot have been well acquainted with Welsh, for 'Go-y-bowen' is an impossible idiom in that language. The right phrase would be 'Bowen-y-go,' = Bowen the smith; and the true derivation of the name Gobowen, it has been suggested, is 'Cob Owen,' = Owen's Cop or mound, from an old earthwork in the neighbourhood. The story, at all events, witnesses to the existence, at the time it was coined, of an English-speaking population, who yet were accustomed to hear and partly understand Welsh.[1]

There is a steep, high-banked lane leading from Newport over one end of Chetwynd Scaur to Edgmond and Tibberton, of which the real name is 'Cheney Hill.' Now-a-days, however, it is commonly called *China* Hill. This is a supposed refinement on *Chainey* Hill, the name by which it is known by the older inhabitants, who declare that it is so called because it is so steep that—in that level part of the country where 'drags' are almost unknown—it is necessary to *chain* the wheels of loaded waggons going down it. Whereas the truth is, that in the dialect of the Newport district—as also in great part of Staffordshire—long *e* is pronounced *ai*. Thus *Cheney* naturally becomes *Chainey*, and this by an ignorant pseudo-refinement, *China*.

One of the variants of the Ellesmere legend (as noted in ch. viii.) makes the mere gain its name from Mrs. *Ellis*, the churlish old woman who once lived on the spot. The famous Shropshire Simnels owe their name to a quarrel between an old couple named Sim and Nell.[2] Selattyn on the Welsh border is called from a local schoolmaster, who said, 'I sell Latin.' Many more such droll bits of etymological legend might be picked up throughout Great Britain by careful inquirers. For instance, Moreton Hampstead, on the borders of Dartmoor, is supposed to be named because belated travellers returning from Exeter market to Tavistock were frequently obliged

[1] See Appendix on *Wales and Shropshire*.
[2] See further under *Days and Seasons*.

to take refuge at *a town on the moor instead of home*, i. e. Moreton Hampstead.[1]

Further, 'Stanton Harcourt is thought by indigenous inquirers to be so styled because there was once a great battle there, and when the English were being defeated the king called to his general, as Lord Hartington might do now, "Stand to un, Harcourt." In Berwickshire there is a village called Longformacus, a sufficiently odd name. The local explanation is that when the Romans were quartered thereabouts, one Macus kept a canteen for the soldiery. When they were sent north, the thirsty legionaries would naturally "long for Macus" and his tap of Falernian—hence the name. Even a place called Forbes is thus handled. It is said that a lady named Elizabeth was carried off by a party of raiding Highlanders. Her lover rushed on their track, rescued his mistress, and dealing impassioned blows around, cried, "For Bess, for Bess!"'[2]

Somewhat akin to these legends are the Nickname-stories attached to the natives of various places. The inhabitants of Melverley, a low-lying village in the extreme west of Shropshire, which is very subject to floods from the rivers Severn and Vyrniew, are sometimes called *Melverley God-helps*. It is an old Salopian joke that if a native of Melverley, when at a distance from home, be asked where he comes from, should it be a dry season he will reply proudly, 'From Melverley, wheer else?' But if, on the contrary, the season happens to be wet, the piteous answer will be, 'From Melverley, God help us!'

A bit of the story of the Wise Men of Gotham is localized at Madeley-on-Severn. It is said that the people of Madeley wished to keep the cuckoo with them all the year round. So they surrounded her by standing in a ring with clasped hands, thinking that thus they should easily imprison her; but much to their disappointment, she flew over their heads and escaped, and they have paid the penalty of

[1] BRAY, *Traditions of Devon* (1838), Vol. I. 10. For other (and very droll) instances see KEIGHTLEY, *Tales and Popular Fictions*, p. 249. Also STERNBERG, *Dialect and Folk-Lore of Northamptonshire*, p. 139.

[2] *Daily News*, Tuesday, 19th August, 1879.

their simpleness by being known ever since as the Wise Men o' Madeley.[1]

The inhabitants of another colliery village, Dawley, are known in the surrounding neighbourhood (and especially, it is said, at Wellington) as the 'Dawley Oaves.' This nickname is derived, so the story goes, from the performance of an oaf *par excellence*, 'the Dawley Barrow-maker,' who built a wheelbarrow in an outhouse with so small a door that he could not get the barrow out of it when it was finished!

'A pretty Ketley set' is another of these uncomplimentary nicknames, dating from the time—some seventy or eighty years ago—when the Ketley ironworks were first opened, and when Ketley was the newest and most uncivilized of the colliery villages. The young men employed in the works were in the habit of idling about the surrounding country on pay-nights, calling at all the public-houses, spending money lavishly, and playing so many mischievous pranks, that the warning was commonly given on seeing a party of them approach, 'Take care, here is a pretty Ketley set coming.'

About the same date a set of wild youths at Wem gained for themselves and their steady-going fellow-townsmen the nickname of 'the Wem Ranters'; a name which was also considered to convey a sarcasm on the somewhat noisy piety of the Primitive Methodists, who were at that time attracting much public attention.

In Gough's *History of Myddle*, (a quaint old account of various North Shropshire parishes and their inhabitants written in the end of the seventeenth century,) there is an old story of the naming of Bristle Bridge in that parish, which may follow here.

Bristle Bridge was built at the expense of the parish about the year 1640, to span a brook which crosses the road about half way

[1] There was a story current in the neighbourhood of Edgmond, that an old clergyman of that district (who died 1864) raised his garden wall a foot all round to keep the sparrows out. He had observed, he said, that the sparrows only just cleared the wall as they entered the garden, so he thought a very little additional height would prevent their flying over it at all. The same old gentleman figures in a local proverb applied to the useless contrivances of over-ingenious people—'Like old Mr. ——, who fell over a wheelbarrow in Newport street, and took off his spectacles to see what it was.'

between Shrewsbury and Ellesmere, and the story of the hero in ridicule of whose boasts the name was given, will be best related in Gough's own words.

'There is a certain cave in the rock near this bridge, which was formerly a hole in the rock and called Goblin's Hole, and afterwards was made into a habitation, and a stone chimney built up to it by one Fardoe. After whose death one Will Preece, son of Griffith ap Preece of Newton on the Hill (a wealthy tenant holding the lands of Corbett, Esqre, in Newton), dwelt in it. This Will Preece was set apprentice by his father to a Goldsmith in London, but soon outwent [= ran away from] his master and went for a soldier in Queen Elizabeth's time in the Low Countries. At his return he married the daughter of Chetwall of Peplow in Hodnett parish, and came to live in this cave. After his return from the wars he told so many romantic stories of his strange adventures that people gave him the name of Scoggin,[1] by which name he was better known than by the name of Will Preece. But amongst the rest of the stories that were told of him or by him, one was that he had killed a monstrous boar of so large a size that the bristles on his back were as big as pikeavill grains.[2] The story being [talked of] among the neighbours and workmen that were building the bridge, they gave it the name of Bristle Bridge, which name still continues.'

There are a few more scattered traditions concerning various places in the county, which may as well be told here, though they have no particular connection with the subject in hand.

The beautiful old mansion of Plaish Hall in the parish of Cardington was built—or rather enlarged and altered—by Sir William Leighton, Chief Justice of North Wales (ob. 1607), whose handsome alabaster tomb may be seen in Cardington Church. The house is built of brick, arranged in variegated patterns, with some fine chimneys of ornamental moulded bricks, a picturesque construction

[1] '*Skogan* (the quartos have *Skoggin*, the folios *Scoggan* or *Schoggan*), name in *Hen. IV.*, Part II., Act iii., Sc. 2, l. 33. Subject to much controversy, two notorious persons of the 14th and 15th centuries, one a poet and the other a jester, being called so.'—SCHMIDT, *Shakspeare Lexicon*. [W. W. S.]

[2] Pikeavill grains = the prongs of a pitchfork. See **Pikel** and **Grains** in *Shropshire Word-Book*.

very uncommon in Shropshire. The story goes that a criminal who was brought before Judge Leighton, offered to build such chimneys at his new house at Plaish as no man ever saw before, or could build the like of after, provided the judge would not pass the sentence of death which was the due meed of his crimes. The judge accepted the bribe, and set the prisoner at liberty. The man built the chimneys according to his promise, but no sooner were they finished than the judge sent the builder to prison again, and had him hanged with all speed. Thus he at the same time satisfied the demands of justice, and made it indeed impossible for any other house to have such chimneys afterwards, since the only man who could build them was safely put out of the way.[1]

There is a story to the effect that our famous Roman city of Uriconium was destroyed by sparrows. The besiegers, so runs the tale, found it impossible to make any breach in the strong and solid masonry of the walls. They therefore caught immense numbers of sparrows, tied lighted matches to their tails, and set them free close to the besieged city. The sparrows alighting on the roofs set the place on fire, and it fell an easy prey to the enemy. When Mr. Wright first visited the excavations at Uriconium, one of the people of the place offered to show him the spot where the sparrows were let loose. The same story, he remarks, is told at Silchester.[2]

The parish churches of Albrighton and Donington (near Shiffnal) stand curiously near together on the high banks overhanging one of the picturesque dingles containing a pretty sheet of water, which are common in that part of the country. The two churches are of different styles and dates, but legend tells that they were built by two sisters in a spirit of rivalry, and that this is the reason why Donington Church is so far from any village, and so much in one corner of the parish.[3]

[1] There are several versions of this legend, but this is the best I have heard.

[2] And was told at Cirencester in the 12th century: see LAYAMON, ed. Madden, Vol. III., p. 172. [W. W. S.]

[3] It has been suggested to me that this is not a genuine old tradition, but merely *ben trovato* by some ingenious brain of late years, but after making all possible inquiry I have come to the conclusion that it is really an old story, once nearly forgotten, but lately revived.

A pretty legend was told at Moreton Corbet; whether it is still remembered there I have unfortunately no means of ascertaining.

Long, long ago, in the time of the Crusades, the heir of the house of Corbet went away to the wars, and remained away so long that his family gave up hopes of ever seeing him again, and at last mourned for him as dead. His younger brother succeeded to his land, and prepared to take to himself a wife and reign in the old halls of the family. On the wedding day, in the midst of the feasting and rejoicing, a pilgrim came to the gate asking hospitality and alms. He was bidden to sit down to the board and share the feast. Scarcely was the banquet ended, when the pilgrim revealed himself as the long-lost elder brother. The poor bridegroom acknowledged him at once, and prepared to give up the estates and retire into poverty with the wife whom he had unconsciously deceived. The elder brother refused to allow any such step. He generously resigned the greater part of the estates to his brother, and preferred to spend his life in obscurity upon one small manor, rather than to destroy all the worldly prospects of the happy pair.

There seems to be some very small basis of fact for this legend. The Corbets of Shropshire, one branch of whom are owners of Moreton Corbet, are among the very oldest of the many old Shropshire families. They trace their descent back to Corbet the Norman, whose sons Robert and Roger appear in Domesday Book as holding large estates under Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury. The grandsons of Roger Corbet were Thomas Corbet of Wattlesborough and Robert Corbet of Caus. Thomas, who was evidently the elder of the two, went beyond seas, leaving his lands in the custody of his brother Robert. Both brothers left descendants, but the elder branch of the family never attained to such rank and prosperity as the younger one. Hence perhaps the legend; but Moreton Corbet did not come into the possession of the family till long after this date.[1]

And now we come to what is probably the youngest of the legends of Shropshire. It is one which strongly reminds us of the marvellous feats of fiends and giants with which our series began. Every one who has visited Shrewsbury knows the beautiful public pleasure-

[1] See BLAKEWAY, *Sheriffs of Shropshire*, p. 39.

ground sloping down to the Severn, and oddly named the Quarry. In former times it was used for games, open-air plays, and so forth; but in the year 1719 the Corporation determined to lay it out and plant it with trees for a public promenade. One Wright, a famous nurseryman of those days, living at Bicton, was employed, and about four hundred trees, more or less, were planted, which now form beautiful shady avenues by the river-side. Such are the facts; now for the legend.

Thomas Wright was a famous nurseryman in old days. He had made a large fortune by his trade, and wished to spend some of it in benefiting the town of Shrewsbury. He therefore proposed to plant the Quarry with trees, but the Mayor and Corporation were old-fashioned people, and refused to allow any change to be made. But Wright would not be gainsaid. He was a man who knew more than most people, and understood a good deal about conjuring and that sort of thing. He was determined that the Quarry should be planted, and by means of his magic he managed, with only two men to help him, to plant all the trees in a single night, and when the Mayor got up in the morning, the thing was done. But even he was obliged to own that the work was a great improvement, and it was therefore allowed to remain.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCERNING GHOSTS.

PART I.

"Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide."
Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V. Sc. ii.

"Yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damnèd spirits all,
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone."
Ibid., Act III. Sc. ii.

A CLERGYMAN was walking from Rushbury to Cardington one dark winter's evening, when he heard the steps of some one running behind him, and presently a lad of sixteen or seventeen overtook him and kept pace with him along the road. Not feeling inclined to talk to a stranger, he hurried on without speaking, but however fast he walked, the lad kept up with him. At last the clergyman gave up the attempt, slackened his pace, and exchanged a few words with his unbidden companion. The two then walked on side by side in silence for some distance. At length they reached a shed by the road-side in a field near Wall, and when safely past it, the boy volunteered a remark. 'Folks sen as theer's summat to be sid [seen] about that theer buildin'.' *He* had never seen it. He had gone past that building many and many a time, in early morning and late at night, but he had never seen anything, and he did not believe there was anything to be seen. So he said. But

it was plain enough from his behaviour, that he did not choose to go past the shed alone if he could help it!

This anecdote is a very fair example of the feeling of most of the Shropshire villagers towards ghost-stories. They do not believe them —or so they say—but they would rather not venture near certain places after nightfall, for fear, to use the favourite South Shropshire expression, there should be 'summat to be sid' there.

A gruesome adventure befell the father of William Hughes, of Longnor, as he was crossing the Longmynd in the twilight one evening, on his way to visit some relations who lived on the Ratlinghope side. In a hollow of the road he met a funeral—a hearse, and bearers, and pall-bearers, and 'crowds of people, droves of them, going as fast as fast,' and they filled up the road so that he had to stand on one side to let them pass. He wondered a good deal that a funeral should take place at that hour, and that it should travel at such a pace, and when he reached his journey's end he told his friends of it, and asked whose funeral it could be. 'Funeral!' they said, 'there's no one dead. Where did you meet it?' He described the place. '"Oh!" they says, "that's no funeral," they says, "theer's *al'ay summat to be sid* about theer!"'[1]

The mysterious 'summat' very often takes the form of an animal. On Saturday evening, June 11th, 1881, the mistress of a house near Condover was helping her servant to finish off her work. While she was doing so the girl for some reason went to the back-door, but rushed back instantly, white and trembling, screaming out, 'O Miss Anne! there's the *know* of a dog! O! O!' 'What *do* you mean, Martha?' 'The *know* of a dog, ma'am, the shape of a dog when the dog isn't there. O Miss Anne, don't go!' The lady, however, persisted in going out, and there saw the form of a large grey dog, which moved noiselessly away and disappeared, she could not exactly say how. Finding on inquiry that the only grey dog she knew at any of her neighbours' houses had been fastened up that evening, she

[1] 'Twm o'r Nant,' the Welsh peasant-poet, tells in his autobiography that when he kept a turnpike in Caermarthenshire, he frequently saw phantom hearses and funeral processions go through the gate, especially during the night. See Borrow, *Wild Wales*, 3rd edition, p. 189.

was herself half-inclined to wonder whether it could indeed have been a spectre.

Old John Thomas (see chap. vii.) could tell of many spots where the 'prentice lads about Bishop's Castle were frightened by the sight of phantom dogs and pigs, and hideous headless creatures. Another such place is the road which passes by Montford Church, near Shrewsbury. A large dog is said to be seen there at night, and once a man who was passing saw a donkey lying by the road-side. He put out his foot to touch it, and it rose like a cloud and vanished! 'This is a fact,' added Sarah Mason, a well-educated young woman of Baschurch, who, in 1879, told, collected, and wrote down a great deal of Folk-lore belonging to the country north of Shrewsbury, for the use of the present work.

Wild Edric, according to some, haunts the Stretton Hills in the form of a large black dog with fiery eyes.

Generally, but not necessarily always, the scene of such apparitions as the above is the spot where a murder has been committed, where a criminal has been gibbeted, where a suicide has been buried, or where anybody has come to an untimely end. Sarah Mason could tell of no less than three such places, haunted by animal ghosts, in her immediate neighbourhood. A man who hanged himself at Broomfield near Shrewsbury 'came again' in the form of a large black dog. A headless black dog haunts the road between Yeaton and Baschurch, at the place where a man was murdered. The third shall be given in her own words:

'Two or three generations back, there was a lady buried in her jewels at Fitz,[2] and afterwards the clerk robbed her. And she used

[1] In West Sussex, the incessant barking of a dog is supposed to be caused by the sight of the ghost of another dog, invisible to human eyes. See *Folk-Lore Record*, Vol. I. p. 17. The Lancashire Boggarts are not always actually *ghosts* of deceased persons, but uncanny spirits appearing in the shape of animals, called Trash, Skriker, or Bargest. Compare the Mauthe Doog, which haunts the Isle of Man, Shuck the Dog-fiend of East Norfolk, and the terrific Gwyllgi, or Dog of Darkness, of Wales. All these are demons in animal form, not disembodied spirits. See WIRT SIKES, *British Goblins*, 168. *Choice Notes*, p. 190. HARLAND AND WILKINSON, *Lancashire Folk-Lore*, 91. HUNT, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, I. 315.

[2] See note by Mr. Baring-Gould in *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 57,

to walk Cutberry Hollow in the form of a colt. They called it Obrick's colt. And one night the clerk met it, and fell on his knees, saying, "Abide, Satan! abide! I am a righteous man and a psalm-singer!"'[1]

This story has been a matter of tradition for several generations. Generally the ghost was called *Obitch's* colt, from the name of the thief, who, by the way, 'had niver no pace atter: a was sadly troubled in his yed, and mithered.' 'Obitch used to say,' said an old nurse to Mr. Hartshorne (1841), 'that he seed the cowt as natural as any Christian, and he used to get up clos agen the style for him to get up atop of his back, and at last the coult growed so bould that folks sidden him in the daytime.'[2]

A very weird story of an encounter with an animal ghost arose of late years within my own knowledge. On the 21st of January, 1879, a labouring man was employed to take a cart of luggage from Ranton in Staffordshire to Woodcote, beyond Newport, in Shropshire, for the use of a party of visitors who were going from one house to the other. He was late in coming back; his horse was tired, and could only crawl along at a foot's pace, so that it was ten o'clock at night when he arrived at the place where the highroad

of a Yorkshire gentleman who was rebuked for wishing to leave the wedding-ring on the hand of a corpse, by the saying, 'Ye mun no send her to God wi' her trinkets about her.'

[1] What apparently insignificant sayings occur again and again in folk-lore stories! Another Baschurch woman knew the expression, 'I'm a righteous man and a psalm-singer,' used to deprecate horse-play or teasing tricks, but could not tell any story about it. An old nurse at Shrewsbury had a different story for it, as follows. A certain parish clerk at Montford was going home one Sunday night rather the worse for drink, and saw an old woman standing at her garden wicket with her apron thrown over her shoulder. Taking her for something unearthly, he staggered into the roadway, exclaiming, 'Sattan, Sattan! I'll defy thee! fur I'm a righteous mon, a Saum-singer, and Clerk o' Mumfort!' And this apparently purely Salopian joke turns up again in Mrs. Bray's *Traditions of Devon* (II. 283). Here it is said that a tipsy choirman of Tavistock was riding home on his donkey, which became unmanageable, and rushed towards a spot where 'goblins' were dancing in a ring. The man cried, 'Stop, Mr. Devil, stop, I say! *I am a righteous man and a psalm-singer to boot at Tavistock Church!*' (Finally the donkey kicked him off into a ditch, where he was found next morning.)

[2] HARTSHORNE, *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 522. *Obitch* would, in Shropshire, be the natural pronunciation of the surname *Holbeach*.

crosses the Birmingham and Liverpool Canal. Just before he reached the canal bridge, a strange black creature with great white eyes sprang out of the plantation by the road-side and alighted on his horse's back. He tried to push it off with his whip, but to his horror the whip went *through* the Thing, and he dropped it to the ground in his fright. The poor tired horse broke into a canter, and rushed onwards at full speed with the ghost still clinging to its back. How the creature at length vanished the man hardly knew. He told his tale in the village of Woodseaves, a mile further on, and so effectually frightened the hearers that one man actually stayed with his friends there all night, rather than cross the terrible bridge which lay between him and his home. The ghost-seer reached home at length, still in a state of excessive terror (but, as his master assured me, perfectly sober), and it was some days before he was able to leave his bed, so much was he prostrated by his fright. The whip was searched for next day, and found just at the place where he said he had dropped it.

Now comes the curious part of the story. The adventure, as was natural, was much talked of in the neighbourhood, and of course with all sorts ot variations. Some days later the man's master (Mr. B—— of L——d) was surprised by a visit from a policeman, who came to request him to give information of his having been stopped and robbed on the Big Bridge on the night of the 21st January! Mr. B——, much amused, denied having been robbed, either on the canal bridge or anywhere else, and told the policeman the story just related. 'Oh, was that all, sir?' said the disappointed policeman. 'Oh, I know what *that* was. That was the Man-Monkey, sir, as *does* come again at that bridge ever since the man was drowned in the Cut!'[1]

I heard this from Mr. B—— himself, a week or two later.

Let us now cross the county, from north-east to south-west. 'The Roarin' Bull o' Bagbury,' although he has been 'laid' for generations, is still talked of about Bishop's Castle and all along the Shropshire side of the Border. Hyssington, the scene of his conquest by the assembled parsons, is a parish partly in Shropshire and partly in Montgomeryshire, which here runs up into Shropshire in a penin-

[1] Cut = canal. See *Shropshire Word-Book.*

sular form. 'There's a prill o' waiter as divides the sheeres,' said William Hughes.[1] This, if I understand aright, is the very streamlet crossed by Bagbury Bridge, where the bull asked to be laid, so altogether the story may be said to belong to both counties. It was thus taken down in 1881 from the narration of an old farmer named Hayward.

'There was a very bad man lived at Bagbury Farm, and when he died it was said that he had never done but two good things in his life, and the one was to give a waistcoat to a poor old man, and the other was to give a piece of bread and cheese to a poor boy, and when this man died he made a sort of confession of this. But when he was dead his ghost would not rest, and he would get in the buildings[2] in the shape of a bull, and roar till the boards and the shutters and the tiles would fly off the building, and it was impossible for any one to live near him. He never come till about nine or ten at night, but he got so rude at last that he would come about seven or eight at night, and he was so troublesome that they sent for twelve parsons[3] to lay him. And the parsons came, and they got him under, but they could not lay him; but they got him, in the shape of a bull all the time, up into Hyssington Church. And when they got him into the church, they all had candles, and one old blind parson, who knowed him, and knowed what a rush he would make, he carried his candle in his top boot. And he made a great rush, and all the candles went out, all but the blind parson's,[4] and he said, "You light your candles by mine." And while they were in the church, before they laid him, the bull made such a burst that he cracked the wall of the church from the top to the bottom, and the crack was left as it was for years, till the church was done up; it was left on purpose for people to see. I've seen it hundreds of times.[5]

[1] Prill = a runlet, a brook. See *Shropshire Word-Book*.

[2] Farm-buildings.

[3] 'Nine parsons' (John Clark).

[4] 'One parson named Pigeon put his candle in his boot, and the ghost said, "Two to thee, Pigeon,"' writes John Clark, a miner, who adds, 'This legend dates 1620.' These are the only variations in the story, as I had it from four different persons, natives of the immediate neighbourhood.

[5] Some remarkable cracks really existed in the walls of Hyssington Church.

'Well, they got the bull down at last, into a snuff-box, and he asked them to lay him under Bagbury Bridge, and that every mare that passed over should lose her foal, and every woman her child; but they would not do this, and they laid him in the Red Sea for a thousand years.

'I remember the old clerk at Hyssington. He was an old man then, sixty years ago, and he told me he could remember the old blind parson well.'

But long after the ghost had been laid in the Red *Say*, 'folk were always frightened to go over Bagbury Bridge,' said John Thomas. 'I've bin over it myself many a time with horses, and I always got off the horse and made him go quietly, and went pit-pat, ever so softly, like this, for fear of *him* hearing me and coming out.' And the old man got up and stumped about the cottage in his heavy boots, making a very unsuccessful attempt to show how gently he could walk.

William Hughes knew a young man who lived in service at Bagbury, and was sitting up one night waiting for his master to come in. All the doors were fast locked, and every one else was in bed, when the outer door suddenly burst open, and a black man came silently in and passed through the kitchen and out at the opposite door. The youth went and fastened the doors and sat down again by the fire, but in a few minutes the same thing happened again. The doors burst open and the black man passed through the house, in at the back door and out at the front. All through that night, as often as the lad shut the doors, the same thing happened over and over again. And he never dared speak to the strange visitor, for 'he took it to be the squire.'

Bagbury is evidently an old-fashioned mansion now used as a farm-house; and the hero of the story is sometimes called a farmer and sometimes 'the Squire,' according to the period at which each story-teller imagines him to have lived. The legend is somewhat differently told in the following lines, written by Susan Jones, a young woman from the same part of the country, one of the many verse-makers in humble life to be met with in Shropshire.

'I have heard a curious story, but I don't believe it's true,
About the Ghost of Bagbury and the things it used to do.
So draw your chair up closer and make a cheerful light,
And I'll tell you all about it as we're sitting here to-night.
There was once a wicked Squire who lived at Bagbury Hall,
So rich that half the country round, his own he used to call;
But so dreadfully fierce-tempered and so free of kicks and knocks,
That people said he would not die, but change into an ox.
As time passed on their prophecies were partly verified—
He certainly became an ox, although at first he died.
And if we may believe the tales the country-people told,
There never was a ghost before so vicious or so bold.
He used to haunt the roads by night with flaming eyes and horns,
And drive poor travellers into brooks, or over stones and thorns.
He'd shake the cottage walls and roofs from night till morning clear,
Till people trembled in their beds, and could not sleep for fear.
Or else he'd enter quietly when all were fast asleep,
And fling the plates and dishes down in one great broken heap.
The things the house-wives valued most, or oftenest did require,
They'd find them broken on the ground or burning in the fire.
Such things as these could not be borne in country or in town,
And so they begged the parson's help to come and read him down.
"O yes," the good man said; "if you will bring him to the Church,
I'll read him down into a shoe, and lay him in the porch."
I do not know what means they used, the creature to ensnare,
But it's a fact they went to Church and somehow got him there.
And then the parson read and read till night began to fall,
And then the ghost, to their delight, looked very weak and small;
But can't you fancy their alarm when all the lights burnt out!
They had no more; the reader stopped; he could not see without.
Straightway the ghost began to grow, until 't was very plain
He'd soon be larger than before, and all their labour vain.
It must have grieved them as the form increased before their eyes
Until the very walls were cracked with his enormous size.
When oh! there passed a traveller, his lantern in his hand:
They were not long before they all gave him to understand.
He brought his light, the parson read, the ghost shrunk all away,
Till they could squeeze him in the shoe, and there he lies this day.'[1]

In this version the candles, instead of being part of the ceremonial of ghost-laying, are merely used to give light to the reader. This is more like the form in which Mr. Wright tells the story, and which has been copied from him by local antiquaries and guide-book writers till it has gained some acceptance as '*The* Legend of Hyssington Church,' to the exclusion of other versions. It omits

[1] Compare BRAND, *Popular Antiquities* (Hazlitt's ed., 1870), Vol. III. p. 332, § 35.

the ghostly nature of the bull altogether, and in several points seems a later version than the foregoing. Briefly told, it is as follows :

There was a wicked squire who lived at Bagley[1] and who made his men work over hours, swore at them, and gave them nothing to drink. At last one of them in desperation wished that he might be turned into a bull, and the wish took effect. But such a monstrous and savage bull as he, did more harm than a dozen wicked squires, and as there were no churches or parsons in that country then, the people were entirely at his mercy. At length Hyssington Church was built, and the people resolved to try and get the parson to talk to the bull and quiet him. So they assembled all round him for miles, and drew closer and closer till they got him up to the Church. The parson read texts to him all the way, and he continually grew smaller and tamer. Once inside the Church, the parson began to preach, and the bull was slowly but steadily decreasing, when night came on before the work was finished. Only a small bit of candle could be found, and when it was burnt out the parson could see no longer, and was obliged to stop reading. The bull was then about the size of a dog, but as soon as the parson ceased he began to grow again, till he was larger than before. The Church was not big enough to hold him and the walls cracked around him. (You may see the cracks to this day.) Next day the parson came again, and this time the people brought a good store of candles, and the reading went on without interruption, till the bull was so small that they could bind him up in a boot, which one of the congregation gave up for the purpose. They then buried him 'deep under the door-stone, where he lies to this day. There are believers in this story, who affirm that were the stone to be loosened the bull would come forth again by many degrees worse than he was at the first, and that he could never again be laid.'[2]

[1] A mistake. Bagley is in the north, a few miles from Ellesmere.

[2] *Collectanea Archæologica*, Vol. I. Part I. 'There was a woman hanged on a tree at Cutberry,' said Sarah Mason of Baschurch. 'And she *came again* so badly that nine clergymen had to be fetched to lay her. So they read and read until they got her into a bottle, and they buried it under a flat sandstone in the road. We used to go past the stone every time we went to school, *and I've often wondered if she was there still, and what would happen if any one was to pull the stone up!*'

It is not an invariable rule that ghosts should take the form of animals. Often they appear in human shape, but generally with some ghastly change; for instance, headless, or in white grave-clothes. A road near Hodnet is haunted by the ghost of a farmer, who, for no known reason, comes again with a horse's head! One of the ghosts of the Baschurch neighbourhood is that of a man who hanged himself at Nesscliff, and who is to be seen 'riding about in his trap at night without a head.'

A man was buried at a 'four-lane-end' in Lyneal Lane (Ellesmere), with a forked stake run through the body to keep it down, and since then there has always been 'frittenin'' in the 'Drumby Hole' close by.[1] A man was once passing the place in a waggon with three horses, when he (and they) saw a woman without a head; at which the horses took fright, and started off, overturning the waggon and pitching the man into the Drumby Hole, where the waggon and shaft-horse fell upon him. The other two horses broke loose and galloped home, where they arrived covered with foam, and on a search being made, the dead body of the waggoner was found in the hole.[2] Exactly twelve months afterwards his son was killed by the same horses on the same spot.

The headless ghost in this story is of a different sex from the person whose death is supposed to cause its restlessness. The same is the case with the ghost of the Mary Way, a now almost forgotten spectre of more than a hundred years ago. The figure of a woman in white was supposed to haunt the spot where a murderer was buried (more probably a suicide—murderers were hung in chains) at the cross roads about two miles from Wenlock on the Bridgnorth road, which is known as the 'Mary Way,' no doubt from some chapel or processional route, in honour of the Virgin.[3]

Perhaps the most uncanny story of all is one which comes to us from Bridgnorth. Some thirty years ago, a young Shropshire lady yet living was on bad terms with her aunt, who had said many unkind

[1] Four-lane-end = a cross-road. Frittenin' = ghostly terrors. Drumby Hole = a rough wooded dingle. See *Shropshire Word-Book.*

[2] It is not clear *who described* the apparition. Perhaps the horses did!

[3] It shows how legends grow, that when first I heard the story it was told of the *ghost of Mary Way*, as if it were a woman of that name.

things of her, amounting even to slanders, and had altogether done her much dis-service. However, the aunt had gone to live in Paris, and they had not met for some time. The niece went to stay with some friends at Bridgnorth, and one day drove out with them in the direction of Cleobury North. They were nearly a mile from Bridgnorth, when the horse stopped suddenly. The driver whipped it: it did not stir. He struck it more violently: it still refused to move. Miss ——, a spirited country girl, declared that she could manage it, and she sprang out of the carriage, took the horse by the bridle, and tried to lead it on, at the same time gently striking it with the whip she had taken from the driver. She found herself flung aside against the fence by some power she could not understand. She felt its presence, but at first saw nothing. Then a gigantic arm and hand slowly became visible, holding the poor horse by the neck in its cruel grasp, but no more of the monster form appeared. A moment or two later, while they paused in fright and horror, through the clear still air they heard the tones of the church clock at Bridgnorth striking twelve. The hand slowly unclasped its hold and faded away. The enchantment was dissolved and the horse moved on again, but he was never fit for work afterwards, and it was long before the young lady recovered the shock, which was all the greater when she heard that her wicked old aunt had died at Paris a few minutes before noon on that very day.[1]

Ghosts do not always keep the same form; witness the following story. At a certain house at Hampton's Wood (near Ellesmere) six illegitimate children were murdered by their parents and buried in a

[1] Here it seems as if the old woman after death became endowed with the witch's power of *arrestation*. In the legend of 'Pwyll Prince of Dyved,' the Lord of Gwent mysteriously loses the foals of one of his mares as soon as born. He watched, and while doing so, 'he heard a great tumult, and after the tumult behold a claw came through the window into the house, and it seized the colt by the mane. Then he drew his sword and struck off the arm at the elbow, so that that portion of the arm with the colt was in the house with him. And then did he hear a tumult and wailing both at once,' and rushed out. Returning presently, he found an infant within, whom he brought up, and who proved to be the son of Rhiannon Princess of Dyved, whose children had all been mysteriously stolen from her in the night of their birth.—*Mabinogion*, Vol. III. 63.

garden. Ever after there was 'frittenin'' in that place. A ghost in the form of a man, sometimes headless, at other times not so, haunted the stables, rode the horses to water, and talked to the waggoner. Once it appeared to a young lady who was passing on horseback at midnight, and rode before her on her horse. At length a minister was summoned to lay it, and he prayed incessantly for three days and three nights before he could succeed. If he had ceased for a moment his labour would have been in vain. The ghost at first refused to go into the bottle in which it was to be imprisoned, because there was a man outside eating bread and cheese. At last it appeared in the form of a cat, and entered the glass bottle, which was then enclosed in three iron chests, and these were buried under the floor of the barn, where the ghost is safely laid for ninety-nine years. But the poor minister was so exhausted by the task that he died.

The word 'frittenin',' which occurs in the above story, is the Ellesmere name for the vague ghostly terrors indicated in the South Shropshire expression 'there's summat to be sid.' It does not seem necessarily to imply the presence of a ghost, properly so called, but any supernatural record of a crime may be called 'frittenin'.' Thus, the story goes that there is a certain pear-tree in a wood near Ellesmere which bears leaves streaked with red, and red-fleshed fruit. It is said that a woman once murdered her daughter and buried her under the pear tree, where afterwards her body was found, 'and since then there has always been *frittenin'* under this tree.'

This is like the common stories of mysterious and indelible blood-stains on the scene of a murder. We have met with two such traditions in Shropshire within a few miles of each other. The first was told me in Condover parish in 1881, and, however romantic, it is so utterly at variance with facts that there can be no objection to the names appearing in full. It is as follows:

There is a bloodstain on the boards of Condover Hall which has been there since Henry the Eighth's time, and cannot be effaced.

It is the blood of Lord Knevett, who owned the Hall and estate in those days. His son stabbed him in his bed, and he sprang up

and rushed through the chapel crying for help, but could go no further, fell down, and bled to death. The son accused the butler, John Viam, of the murder, and he was tried for it at Shrewsbury, found guilty, and hanged. But at the gallows-foot he prayed that no son might ever succeed his father at Condover again in peace—and the prayer has been fulfilled from that day to this.

There was living at that time or soon after a young man named Owen, who was the son of the ostler at the Lion in Shrewsbury. He was a very clever lad, and was brought up to the law, in which he attained great eminence. He was one day studying the records of some former trials, and in the account of Viam's trial he thought he saw reason to suspect perjury on the part of young Lord Knevett. He was a special favourite with Queen Elizabeth, and he obtained license from her for a new trial, at which he was made counsel for the prosecution.[1] But there was so much reason to fear a riot in Shrewsbury on the occasion that the Queen undertook to come thither herself, under the pretext of wishing to see a play performed by the boys of the school, in the hope that her presence might divert the attention of the townspeople from the trial, and generally tend to preserve order. But either the trial came on sooner than was expected, or the Queen was delayed on the road, for she had only arrived at Coventry when the enigmatical message reached her from Owen, '*The play is played out*,' and she returned again. Owen had won his cause. The wicked young lord was condemned to death and hanged; and the Queen rewarded the counsel with his forfeited estate of Condover. But John Viam's curse rests on the place even now. Owen himself did not live to touch the rents, and though his remote descendants hold the property still, no son has ever succeeded his father there again in peace.[2]

[1] Or judge, I forget which.

[2] The following are the facts as to the ownership of Condover, from deeds examined by the late Mr. Joseph Morris of Shrewsbury. It was in the hands of the Crown (with few exceptions) till about 1300. It belonged to the Burnells and their descendants the Lovels in the 13th and 14th centuries. It was forfeited to the Crown, 1487, on the attainder of Francis, ninth Baron Lovel, the story of whose mysterious fate is given in BURKE'S *Extinct Peerages*. 36 Henry VIII. it was granted to Sir Henry Kinjett (or *Knyvett*), who soon sold it, and after passing through several hands, it was bought (28th Elizabeth) in 1586 by Thomas Owen of Lincoln's Inn, afterwards Judge Owen, in whose family it still

The other 'bloodstain' story to which reference was made above is localized by one authority at Plaish Hall near Cardington, and attributed to the last owner of Plaish before it came into the hands of the present possessor's family.

A party of clergy were assembled one Sunday night at Plaish playing cards. All the doors were locked, when suddenly they burst open without any apparent cause. The men locked them again, but presently they burst open a second time, and again a third. Then the Old Gentleman appeared in the midst of the company, and they all rose up and fled, excepting the host, whom the others basely left face to face with the Enemy. None ever saw that wretched man again, either alive or dead. Only a great stain of blood, shaped like a human form, was found on the floor of the room, and despite all efforts, the mark could never be washed out. Ever since then a ghostly troop of horse rides through the house at midnight with such a noise that none can sleep.[1]

The *Clatterin' Glat* on Wenlock Edge (not far from Ippikin's Rock) records another murder, but the story now-a-days told does not account for the name 'Clattering' being applied to the spot. It is a space (or 'glat') in the fence which bounds a certain 'coppy,' or coppice, by the side of the road along Wenlock Edge to Church Stretton. Through it, as Mr. Hubert Smith informs me, passed an

continues. Judge Owen was the son of Richard Owen, a draper (*i. e.*, merchant in the Welsh woollen trade) at Shrewsbury, descended from an old Welsh family. His *son and heir*, Sir Roger Owen, built Condover Hall in 1598, when Henry VIII. had been fifty years in his grave. There is no chapel there. Queen Elizabeth did set out on a 'progress' to Shrewsbury in 1575, but turned aside at Lichfield, and went to Worcester instead, on account of pestilence in the neighbourhood of Shrewsbury (OWEN and BLAKEWAY'S *History of Shrewsbury*, Vol. I. 400, *et seq.*). Part of Condover, which had belonged to the Abbey of Shrewsbury, was bought by George and John *Isam*, temp. Henry VIII., who shortly re-sold it. Hence no doubt the name *Viam* has crept into the legend. Another legend of Condover, which contradicts this one, was given in ch. viii.

[1] This was told with some variation by two servants from different villages north of Shrewsbury. At a certain house—name unknown—a party, among whom was a clergyman, were playing at cards one Sunday night, when the locked doors burst open three times in succession. The third time a great heat passed through the house, and *something* appeared to the card-players, who all fled in haste. Ever since then that house has been haunted.

ancient pathway over the steep face of the cliff into Apedale. Years and years ago, it is said, a son murdered his father in the high-road close by, and dragged the body into the coppice, making up the gap in the hedge with some thorns, the better to hide what he had done. Next morning the 'glat' was re-opened and the corpse exposed; and ever after, if any one tried to fill it up, it was opened again during the following night—'by the fairies,' says one authority: 'no one could tell who did it,' says another; 'but there is summat to be seed there,' said a third.[1]

The expressions 'there's frittenin', and 'there's summat to be seed,' do not to the best of my belief prevail about Newport. Our fears there were of something more definite, of meeting such and such a restless man or woman who 'came again' after death. For instance, a drunken waggoner who was run over and killed by his own horses in a lane between Edgmond and Adeney, about 1868, was said to come again at the spot where he was killed, 'and *very badly* too!' added a respectable farmer in speaking of the affair. In fact, 'they say'n as he comes again,' was a remark tolerably sure to be made after any sudden death, when a spirit had been hurried into the other world before its appointed time, to find, as seems to have been supposed, no place prepared for it.

Sudden death, however, is not the only cause of a spirit's restlessness. Worldly business left unsettled, or heirs defrauded of their due, are also—in Shropshire as all England over—sufficient reasons for 'coming again.'[2]

In the autumn of 1869, a brickmaker, well known in Edgmond, died in the prime of life, leaving a widow and a large young family. He had managed the brickyard at which he worked, for its owner—had bought, sold, and paid wages for him, and had drawn the money due to himself for the number of bricks, pipes, etc., made in the yard, at irregular intervals, so that he really did not know whether he had received all that was due to him or not. But his firm belief

[1] Compare THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, II. 134.

[2] To 'walk,' said of a ghost, is an expression unknown in Shropshire, or at any rate on the Staffordshire side of the county. 'Walking,' in a technical sense, means going in procession, *e. g.* 'The club won't *walk* this year, but they'll have the dinner on Wake Tuesday as usual.'—(*Edgmond*).

was, that his master owed him a large enough sum to keep his widow in comfort, at least till her children were old enough to maintain themselves; and thus persuaded, he died without anxiety for their future. But when he was gone and his affairs were looked into (no easy matter, for the accounts were both confused and complicated), it was found impossible to prove the debt, even had it existed, which seemed doubtful; and the widow and children were reduced to great poverty for want of the expected money. Village public opinion at once assumed that the dead man had been right in his belief, and that his family had been cruelly cheated by his employer. And presently it was rumoured that the brickmaker could not rest in his grave while his widow and orphans were wronged of their due, that he had been seen in the brickyard at night, and that he haunted the man who had oppressed the helpless. The widow herself actually asked me if I thought it was true that her husband 'came again.'

Some years after the owner of the brickyard died also, in the course of nature, at a considerable age. However little he may have deserved it, he was in the eyes of the poorer folk an unjust man and an oppressor, and he must therefore meet with the usual doom of the dishonest man. Accordingly, in a very short time it was mysteriously whispered about the village, 'They say he canna rest, *he comes again!*'

Those who come again, like our brickmaker, to punish their friends' wrongs, generally appear exactly as in life, unchanged in form or character. A certain well-to-do man who lived in the west of Shropshire within living memory, left his landed property to his nephew, and a considerable fortune to his two illegitimate daughters, the children of his housekeeper. Their mother, well provided for by Mr. W—, was at his death turned adrift by the nephew. Her daughters, however, continued to live in their old home with their cousin. A maid-servant who entered the family shortly after (and who is our informant) noticed an elderly man often walking in the garden in broad daylight, dressed in old-fashioned clothes, with breeches and white stockings. He never spoke, and never entered the house, though he always went towards it. Asking who he was, she was coolly told, 'Oh, that is only our old father!' No annoy-

ance seems to have been caused by the poor old ghost, with one exception—that the clothes were every night stripped off the bed of the two unnatural daughters.

The same person who told the above story, once lived in service at a Shropshire farm-house where the mistress had lately died. On the night of her arrival she was, to her great surprise, sent to sleep in the 'best bed.' In the course of the night she was awakened by finding some one in her room, and on opening her eyes she saw the figure of a woman, unknown to her, who came to the bedside and looked earnestly at her, at the same time pointing to a large chest which stood at the bottom of the bed. The family were greatly startled when next morning she told what she had seen. It then appeared that the chest contained a number of clothes belonging to the farmer's late wife, and that she had on her death-bed desired that both it and the clothes should be given to a poor relation whom she named, but her husband for some reason or other neglected to do so. However, on hearing of the apparition he vowed that the warning should be obeyed, and sent off the chest at once. The ghost never came again.

The oddest reason I ever heard given for restlessness after death was madness during life. 'Parson Digger at Condover,' said 'Old Nancy,' 'he come again. He wasn't right in his head, and if you met him he couldn't speak to you sensibly. But when he was up in the pŭlpit, he'd preach, oh, beautifŭl!'[1]

Wickedness is often supposed to bring people again. Like Will-o'-the-wisp, the ghost is too bad for a place in either world, and is compelled to wander homeless. A Mid-Shropshire squire of long ago, who was credited with this fate, was buried (according to tradition) in an old-world fashion, worth recording exactly as it was told me in 1881.

'There's something *does* come again at ——. Not a servant. No. It was the squire himself. When I was a little wench it was, the old squire died.[2] And he *lied* in state, and they buried him at

[1] I leave the name, as I find it is not correctly given. He was a man of recluse and studious habits, rather eccentric, but not crazy.

[2] In 1804, I believe.

midnight, and crowds of people come to see it. And there was men in black with torches in the church, and the vault was opened, and we all went down into it to look at the coffins. And my grandmother took me, and I *ketched out on* her hand. And she asked me, was I frightened? But I wasn't frightened. And my grandmother said it was an old custom with some of the gentry to bury at midnight. But he comes again. He'd bin a very gay gentleman.'

Who could help thinking of Elsie Mucklebackit and Lady Glenallan's funeral?

Only once have I heard of any punishment being inflicted on the spirit of an evildoer, in addition to the doom of everlasting homelessness. This was in the case of a dishonest milk-woman at Shrewsbury, who is condemned to wander up and down 'Lady Studley's Diche' in the Raven Meadow (now the Smithfield) constantly repeating—

'Weight and measure sold I never,
Milk and water sold I ever.'

It is strange enough that this same rhyme is known at Burslem in the Staffordshire Potteries. 'Old Molly Lee,' who used to sell milk there, and who had the reputation of being a witch, was supposed to be seen after her death going about the streets with her milk-pail on her head, repeating it. At other times she would 'get' in the cottages, and sit knitting in the corner. She came both day and night, and annoyed the people so much that they got the neighbouring clergy to meet together in Burslem Church to lay her. So six parsons came, and brought a stone pig-trough into the middle of the church, and 'prayed and prayed that her spirit might have rest.' And at last they saw her hovering in the air up in the roof of the church, and they went on praying, and they saw the form of her come face downwards, gradually 'drawing' down towards the trough. And so they got her into it at last, and took the pig-trough, and put it on her grave in the churchyard, and so she was laid. 'But three of the parsons died of it, and the other three had a big job to get over it. That's true, that is; for I've been over to Burslem Churchyard myself, on purpose to see the pig-trough, and I stood and put my foot in it.' So ended the tale-teller, but a few weeks ago,

(1882). The 'pig-trough' is really an old stone coffin. The tale is well known around Burslem.

Ghosts who occupy themselves after death exactly as they did in life are uncommon in my experience, but others seem to have met with them in Shropshire. The daughter of 'the celebrated Mrs. S.' [Siddons?] related to Mrs. Crowe that when her parents were travelling in Wales, they stayed some days at Oswestry, and lodged in a house which was in a very dirty and neglected state, yet all night long the noise of scrubbing and moving furniture made it impossible to sleep. The servants did little or no work, for they had to sit up with their mistress every night to allay her fears. The neighbours said that this person had killed an old servant, hence the disturbance, and her terror. Mr. and Mrs. S., coming in suddenly one day, heard her cry out, 'Are you there again? Fiend! go away!'[1]

Mr. Hartshorne gives a story of the 'Dary Pit,' a dismal pool at the foot of the Ercall, whose dark waters were in his time (1840) regarded with dread, because "a saiden as how sperrets wun laid under the waiter,' which, in spite of laying, might, it seems, still come abroad. 'One Rutter, a cricker,[2] wuz laid here yo minden; an' a wuz mighty fond o' drink. When a cumm'd whoäm at neet, a wuz uzed to tak a mug un goa into the cellar like, an' fatch him a drop o' drink, an' then him and his wife usen to differ an' quarrel an' aggravate, an' a wenten on a thisns till at last his wife pizened him. After a wuz dhed the mug as a wun uzed to drink out on, cummd down off the shilf as natural as if a'd a cotched hout on it wie his two hands, an' it 'ud goa an' fatch drink out o' the ciller. I've often heärd 'em talking about it: some o' Matthusses people liven thire at the time. They sayden as how his sperrit wuz laid i' the Dary Pit; but I dunna knoa who laid him; yo oughten to know moor about sich things than me, sir, for yo sin I binna larned,' concluded the countryman who was Mr. Hartshorne's informant.

'The Dary Pit is a weird place enough,' writes a correspondent, 'and I don't wonder that such legends were told of it.'

Yet another set of ghosts remains to be noticed—the wild and

[1] *Night side of Nature*, new edition, Routledge, *s.d.*, p. 308.
[2] Cricker = driver of a pack-horse.

dangerous spirits who ride about the lanes at night to the terror of passers-by; the last vestiges of the nightly wanderings of Woden and his train, developed in later times into legends of the Wild Huntsman and the Furious Host, and now descended into stories of an implacable squire or a godless farmer.

Here is the story of 'Squire Blount's Ghost,' as told in full faith by a native of Kinlet, in the far south of Shropshire, in the summer of 1881.

Hundreds of years ago, the Blounts were the squires of Kinlet. You may see the figure of the last of them on his monument in Kinlet Church, kneeling beside his wife, and two young children below them. One of them died from the bite of a mad dog, and the other was choked with the 'scork' of an apple.[1] Besides these two, Squire Blount had a daughter, who grew up to woman's years. And the page-boy fell in love with her, and when a gentleman, who used to come and see her, paid his visits, the boy would say she was not at home. And she too preferred the page, and the end of it was that she married him, and all the property came to them after her father was dead. But old Squire Blount was very angry at the match, as might have been expected, and after his death he came again, and haunted his daughter and her husband, and all their descendants after them, so badly that they had no peace for him. He used to inhabit a pool, which is dried up now, but the site is called Blount's Pool still. Women who went to 'swill'[2] their clothes there were often frightened by seeing him come riding out of the water. And they had to pull down Kinlet old Hall and build it again on a fresh site, for he would even come into the room where they were at dinner, and drive his coach and four white horses across the dinner-table. You can see the place where the old Hall stood now,

[1] Scork = core. See *Shropshire Word-Book*. The monument was erected to the memory of Sir George Blount, who died in 1581, leaving two children, whose figures are shown, as described in the text, with the inscription, 'Here thyre childen be, John and also Dorethy,' but nothing is known, either from the epitaph or otherwise, of the manner of their deaths. Dorothy indeed grew up and made a runaway match with a gentleman of position in the neighbourhood.

The present Hall at Kinlet was built in 1720. The former one stood nearer the Church. The manor of Kinlet has never been sold since the Conquest.

[2] Swill = rinse.

and the cellars are left underground to this day, full of bottles of wines and spirits, and hogsheads of ale and beer. And no one dare touch them for fear of angering Squire Blount's ghost.

At last they got a number of parsons together, and lighted candles, and read and read till all the candles were burnt out but one, and so they quieted him, and laid him in the sea. But there lies a little bottle under his monument in Kinlet Church, and if that were broken he would come again. It is a little flat bottle seven or eight inches long, with a glass stopper in it which nobody can get out, and if the children get hold of it, the women cleaning the church will say to them, 'Take care as you dunna let that fall, for if it breaks old Blount will come again.'[1]

Just as the terrible god of the winds has been degraded into a furious old gentleman driving a coach, so my Lady's page, the hero of what was once, no doubt, a romantic ballad-like story, has descended in the course of ages to the level of an impertinent Buttons!

The next story comes from East Shropshire.

About the year 1820 there lived at the Lizard Grange near Shiffnal a very wicked farmer whom we will call Diggory Mayne. And when he died there was a great storm of wind, and noises heard all over the house, and doors banging without any cause, so that no one could stay in the house, except one man, who was bribed with as much spirits as he liked to drink, to sit up in one of the lower rooms with a good fire. And the horses in the stable were all so restless and excited that they had to be let out to go where they would, lest they should kick the stalls down. All this went on till after the corpse had been removed. And after that many said that Farmer Mayne came again, for they had met him riding on his black pony.

The storm of wind and the terrified horses—always the first creatures to discover the presence of spirits—tell plainly *whose* company the dead man was supposed to have joined.

The ghostly coach and horses which every night drives down a

[1] No such bottle is to be seen now, but our informant had certainly been frightened by this threat in her childhood, some forty years ago.

certain 'Five-acre field' at Frodesley, accompanied by a cold blast of wind, belongs to the same class of apparitions. No doubt too the troop of horse which rides through the house whence the Sabbath-breaking card-player was spirited away by the Evil One, and the phantom funeral which rushed at full speed over the Longmynd, are other fragments of the old myth of the Furious Host.

Most of the midnight riders are feminine, like the German Frau Holda. 'Madam Sandford' of Sandford in the parish of Prees (North Shropshire), is one of these. She is supposed to have lived some four or five generations ago, and to have had a dispute about some landed property, which kept her from resting in her grave. She was laid in a wayside pond called the Black Pool at first, but she 'came again' out of that, and teased the waggoner's lads terribly by riding their horses when they took them down there to water. So they laid her again, and threw the bottle into the Red Sea this time, and to make everything safe they filled up the pool, and since then she has been seen no more.

A far more appalling 'Madam' is Madam Pigott, the ancient terror of Chetwynd and Edgmond. Village tradition (utterly unsupported by genealogical evidence) declares that long ago, no one can tell when, some one or other of the many Madam Pigotts who have in turn reigned in the old family mansion at Chetwynd, was an unloved and neglected wife. When her baby was born, so the story goes, her husband showed no anxiety for her safety, provided his child lived, and on being told of her extreme danger only replied that 'one should lop the root to save the branch.' Neither mother nor child survived, but after her husband had thus cruelly willed her death, Madam Pigott's spirit could find no rest. Night after night, exactly at twelve o'clock, she issued from a trap-door in the roof of Chetwynd (old) Rectory,[1] and wandered through the park and the lanes in the direction of Edgmond, turning over, as she passed it, a large boulder-stone by the roadside between Edgmond and Newport. Her favourite haunt was the steep, dark, high-banked lane, properly called Cheney Hill,[2] but nearly as well known by the name of Madam Pigott's Hill. Near the top of it was a curiously-twisted

[1] Pulled down in 1864.

[2] See last chapter.

tree-root, called Madam Pigott's Armchair.[1] On this, or else on the old stone wall of Chetwynd Park just above it, Madam Pigott used to sit, 'on a moonshiny night,' combing her baby's hair; and if some belated rider passed by (especially if he were on any errand concern- a woman in the same circumstances as herself), she and her black cat would spring up behind him and cling fast, notwithstanding all his efforts, till she came to a 'running water,' then she could go no farther.

At last she became so troublesome that twelve of the neighbouring clergy were summoned to lay her, by incessantly reading Psalms till they made her obedient to their power. Mr. Foy, curate of Edgmond, has the credit of having been the one to succeed in this, for he continued to 'read' after all the others were exhausted.[2] Yet at least ten or twelve years after his death, some fresh alarm of Madam Pigott arose, and a party went in haste to beg a neighbouring rector to come and lay the ghost! And to this day, Chetwynd Hall —which some say was the starting-point of the ghostly ramble—has the reputation of being haunted, and many a strong young groom or ploughboy still shrinks from facing 'Madam Pigott's Hill' after dark.

This wild and gruesome myth is familiar to the poor folk for miles around Chetwynd. The beginning of it was differently told by the gipsies to Mr. Groome, but their account of the laying of the ghost is so much more complete than mine that I venture to quote it here—

'It was at Chetwynd End, near Newport, just by the parson's house; and there was a young lady, Miss Pigott, out hunting, and the horse ran up a great big sandy bank, and threw her off his back

[1] This has disappeared since 1877, and now, I understand, forms part of a rockery in the garden of Summerhill, a neighbouring house.

[2] He died in 1816, aged 61, having been curate of Edgmond twenty-nine years. He was much beloved and respected. The old folk at Edgmond in my time still remembered him fondly, and could tell many tales of his kindness to them as children. Old Betty Cooper once wound up a long talk on ghosts and apparitions by saying that, 'Mr. Foy used to say as he did not believe there was annything to be seed, ex-cept when the soul was in dee-par-tin', then he thought there might sometimes be somethink;' and so she fortified herself against superstitious fears in her old age, by remembering the words of the pastor of her youth, who had then been more than fifty years in his grave.

and killed her. And they said she used to come night and day, and squeak awful. It got so terrible that people couldn't go along the road for fear of her, but then they laid her—threw her into Chetwynd Pool. And somehow the bottle they'd put her in got broken (somebody skating, I think it was); and she came as bad again after that, and got jumping on the men's horses. It seems she would run after everything, carriages and all; so long and by last they got twelve priestes, and they were all round a table with the bottle on it and candles lighted all round. And they all began to pray as hard as they were able, and they kept on till it seemed no manner-able good, and they were very near giving it up; but the oldest of them told them to stick to it, and their candles went all out but his, and he prayed till the sweat dropped off his hair. All the rest, you know, were so afeared; and if his candle went out the devil would have fetched them, and she would have scratted them all to pieces. .... and as fast as they lighted the candles they were blown out, all but this one; and the priest as belonged to that, he prayed and prayed; and at last they saw her come in between the candles, drawing to the mouth of the bottle, and they kept on praying as hard as ever they could. Long and by last they got her in. And then she begged of them not to be thrown into the Red Seas; but the priest he wouldn't hear of it, and so they threw her in, and the place has been in quietness ever since. Why you can see the palings on the road, put in the wall right again the pool where they laid her first.'[1]

One old dame, coeval with the century, and now (1883) living

[1] F. H. Groome, *In Gipsy Tents* (1880), p. 172. The 'parson's house' is at Chetwynd, not Chetwynd End; but all the other topographical details—the high sandy bank, and the railings in the wall—could not be more exact, though Mr. Groome has evidently never seen the place. About 1850, a young lady was drowned when skating on Chetwynd Pool. Perhaps some hazy knowledge of this made the gipsies call the ghost *Miss* Pigott, and connect the skating with her reappearance, or else the East Anglian author has accidentally introduced the Eastern Counties use of Miss for Mrs.

The word 'priest' is still sometimes to be heard in old-fashioned places. 'How did the priest come to hear of it?' asked one of the leaders in a village disturbance which had called forth a rebuke from the Vicar of Leebotwood-with-Longnor, Christmas, 1882.

in Castle Street, Eccleshall, claims to have actually seen Madam Pigott herself, in her childhood. According to her, the unhappy lady was the wife of the last of the Chetwynd Pigotts, who, after her death, was so troubled by her spirit that he shut up his house and went abroad, and eventually sold the property rather than live there. (It is needless to say that the estate was sold, about 1780, for quite other reasons.) The uncle and aunt of Mrs. Garratt—so our old friend is called—were put in charge of the house at a time when it stood empty, early in the present century, and she stayed with them there when a very little girl. Often, she now declares, when she looked out of the window on a moonlight night, she saw a pale white figure sadly and silently wandering about the garden. Strange noises, too, were heard within the house, and when the little girl was frightened by these mysterious sounds, her aunt would say, 'Never mind, child, it's only Madam Pigott coming. *Put your apron over your head when she goes by, and she'll do you no harm.*[1]

Mrs. Garratt lays claim to a ghostly ancestor of her own—'Madam Vernon' of the Lea, near Adbaston in Staffordshire, not more than five or six miles from Chetwynd. Madam Vernon was the wife of Mr. Vernon of the Lea, by whom she had three daughters, co-heirs to his estates. After Mr. Vernon's death she married again, and had a son and daughter. Her second family of course had no right to the Lea, and as her second husband was very 'gay' and extravagant, Madam saved everything she could to amass a fortune for these two children. She put her savings in an earthen pot and hid it in the cellar, without her husband's knowledge, lest he should take the money and spend it. But before she had been able to put her little hoard into safe hands, she was seized with illness. As she lay on her death-bed she tried to tell her story, but speech had failed her. She could only gasp out 'mun—mun,' at the same time pointing downwards. Her children guessed what she would have said, but when, after she was gone, they searched the cellar, nothing was to be found. The selfish father had been beforehand with them, and they never saw anything of their mother's carefully-hoarded coins,

[1] Almost exactly the directions which were given to the girl who saw Wild Edric. See chapter iii.

nor received any inheritance from him in after years. The three half-sisters took possession of the Lea (which has since been sold more than once), and the young brother and sister were obliged to earn their living in very humble callings. But their mother could not rest while her children were defrauded, and she haunted the Lea terribly till they got the parsons to come to her, and they laid her in a 'pit' [= pond] below the house.

Mrs. Garratt is the grand-daughter of Madam Vernon's son, and in her youth was a servant at the house which was once her great-grandmother's. Her fellow-servants knew of her descent, and one day the coachman offered to show her the place where her ancestor's spirit was laid. 'So he took me and showed me, and a nasty little pit it was too, all covered with green slime, and shaped just for all the world like a coffin.'

To return to Shropshire. On the 15th May, 1882, the Rev. W. A. Leighton and the Rev. C. H. Drinkwater, on archæological thoughts intent, paid a visit to the church of Stanton-on-Hine-Heath, nine miles north of Shrewsbury, which was then in course of restoration. Among other things which attracted their notice was a loose brass plate in the vestry, which recorded the fact that 'Elizabeth Browne, daughter of Jonathan Browne of Sowbatch, died January the 6th, 1777, aged 92.' The old clerk, himself eighty-three years of age,—whose father lived to be eighty, having in his turn been clerk for fifty years,—told the visitors that this old lady had first been buried in the Dingle adjoining her father's house, but 'she came again,' so that they were forced to take her up and bury her in the church. She used to sit on a large stone awaiting unwary passers-by, and mount up behind the boys when they took the horses to water, till at last they got all the parsons in the country together, who prayed her unquiet spirit into a bottle, which was buried in the nave of the church.

All this Mr. Drinkwater, at the suggestion of Mr. Leighton, wrote to me the day after their visit. He adds: 'On laying down encaustic tiles last week, instead of the old flags, the workmen were advised to search the tomb for the bottle, but they did not dare to do so. Much fear is expressed in the parish lest the ghost should again take to annoying the waggoners' lads on dark winter evenings.'

Vigorous indeed is the faith in ghosts. So lately as September 1881, a man at Church Stretton, named Roberts, declared that he had seen the ghost of a woman named Sarah Duckett, who had not been seen or heard of for several years, walking near the old Hazel Gate tollbar, and disappearing close to a disused mining shaft known as the Copper Hole. Great was the excitement. Others began to say that they too had seen the apparition. It was supposed that the woman must have been murdered at the turnpike, where she was known to have stayed, and the body thrown down the Copper Hole. A sum of money was collected to defray the cost of clearing out and exploring the old shaft. A party of men were set to work; numbers of people of all classes came to visit the spot; letters, headed 'The Shropshire Mystery,' appeared almost daily in the London papers, describing the progress of the work. At length the bottom of the Copper Hole was reached, and there was found—nothing! It was soon afterwards proved that the missing woman had died in a hospital at Worcester some five years before.

In fact, the fear of ghosts, whether of the recently dead or of traditional spectres supposed to be 'laid' long ago, is still a living and present dread both in Shropshire and Staffordshire. While I write, a scare has arisen in this very household, that a man who is reported to have long ago hanged himself at the corner of the lately-enclosed waste on which the house is built, 'comes again after dark.'

Still, tempers differ, and in nothing more than in credulity. Just as there are superstitious persons to be found among the rich, so there are many who are superior to superstition among the poor. Twice over, in questing for ghost-stories among the country folk, I have, in entirely different parts of Shropshire, been met by the remark, 'I dunna believe as there's anythin' in it, as the dead come back. If they bin gone to the good place they wouldna want to come back, and if they bin gone to the tother place they wouldna be let to!'

CHAPTER XII.

CONCERNING GHOSTS.

PART II.

"The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns."

Hamlet, Act III. Sc. i.

BUT little has been said on the *rationale* of Ghosts, except by those who either have been believers in them, or who, on the other hand, have tried to refute each individual story on its own merits. It may not be amiss therefore to make some observations on the last chapter, which can easily be passed over by those who are disinclined to read them.

I have no doubt that the belief in Ghosts is another of the many relics of heathenism which Mr. Baring-Gould discovers in the popular Christianity of the present day.

One mark of this is the constant transformation of the departed into animals.[1] I believe this to have originated in the classical and mediæval notion of Werwolves, living men who could assume the shape of a wolf at pleasure. Sometimes also a corpse would arise from its grave in the form of a wolf, and might do incalculable damage if it were not at once beheaded and cast into the nearest stream. This is a Prussian fancy, and the English King John too 'is said to have gone about as a werwolf after his death.'[2] Wolves have been extinct in England long enough to have disappeared from

[1] Instances of this transformation will be found in *British Goblins*, p. 167. *Choice Notes*, pp. 170, 188, 223. Mr. Baring-Gould notes 'that the extirpation of wolves in England . . . . . has altered the ancient legends of lycanthropy into stories of transformation [by witchcraft] into hares and cats.'—HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 207, note.

[2] KELLY, *Indo-European Tradition*, p. 261.

popular tales (though not so many centuries as most people suppose), but the Man-Monkey seems very like the old fable in a new guise.

Possibly the animal-form of the ghosts is a mark of the once-supposed *divinity* of the dead. Ancestor-worship is one of the oldest of the creeds. (In the Vedas, the Pitris, or Father-spirits, are ranked among the deities who dwell in the air.[1]) And in all mythologies, we find that the gods could transform themselves into any shape at will, and frequently took those of beasts and birds.

The change which takes place in the character of the dead—the evil nature they show, and the powers of harm they possess (of which Madam Pigott is a striking example)—also points to their having once been thought divine. It is indeed an axiom of Folk lore that the demons and evil beings of folk-tales are the gods of earlier myths, fallen from their high estate, but neither forgotten nor supposed to be mere creatures of the imagination.

An intermediate theory between that of the divinity of the dead, and the popular modern one of their return to harm the living, seems to have been that the bodies of the dead were liable to be possessed by evil spirits. This, says Sir Walter Scott, 'was a favourite fancy of the Northmen.'[2] The custom, not yet extinct, of watching a corpse night and day between the death and the funeral, is a last relic of this idea, and the romance of Fulk Fitz Warine gives us an early Shropshire instance of its prevalence.

'Near the hills and valleys of Wales the king (William I.) found a very large walled town all burnt and ruined, and it stood in a waste country called the White Laund. Formerly the town was called Castle Bran, but now the Old March.[3] When the knights

[1] KELLY, *Indo-European Tradition*, pp. 18, 114.

[2] *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2nd ed., p. 101.

[3] Mr. Wright, in his edition of *Fulk Fitz Warine*, took this to mean Old Oswestry, but afterwards changed his mind and thought it was Uriconium. His first opinion was evidently the right one. Uriconium is much too far east to be in such close connection with Wales. The whole geography and nomenclature of the story point to the Oswestry neighbourhood. The White Laund is the country around *Whit*tington (there is still a hamlet called the *Lawnt* within a few miles), and this story, together with the whole preliminary part of the romance, is a thirteenth century attempt to explain how the Peverels and Fitz Warines became possessed of Whittington.

Brutus and Corineus, and many others, came into this country from Troy, they found it inhabited by a very foul people, great giants, under Geomagog their king. Then Corineus (from whom Cornwall is named) would wrestle with Geomagog, and in his anger at the giant, who squeezed him so tightly as to break three of his ribs, he struck him with his foot, so that Geomagog fell from a rock into the sea and was drowned. But a spirit of the Devil entered into the body of Geomagog, and came into the White Laund and defended it, so that no Briton dared to dwell there. And when King Bran the son of Donwal caused the city to be rebuilt, the Devil came by night and took away everything that was therein, and after that the city lay waste. All this a certain Briton of that country related to the king. When Payn Peverel the king's cousin heard this, he resolved to assay the marvel. So he armed himself, and took his attendants, and addressed himself to lodge a night in the highest building of the Old March. And when it was night there came a great tempest of thunder and lightning, and the foul fiend appeared in the likeness of Geomagog, carrying a club in his hand and breathing forth fire and smoke, and would have made an end of the knight, but Payn signed himself with the sign of the cross, and did battle with the fiend, and vanquished him.

'Then the fiend related to him that when Geomagog was dead, and had rendered his soul to Beelzebub, the prince of the evil spirits, he then entered into the giant's body and came into the White Laund to guard the treasures which Geomagog kept there underground. For he had golden oxen and horses, and swans and peacocks, and a golden bull, to which the giants paid honour twice a year, and which through the power of the Devil was their prophet, and showed them things to come. And here the fiend and his companions held revel and jousts and tournaments. And many came to see them, but none returned again. At length there came a disciple of Christ, named Augustine, who by his preaching and his baptism greatly injured the Evil One's power. When the fiend had said this, he came out of the body of the giant, and immediately the weather was clear and fair. And in the morning they took up the body of the giant and cast it into a deep pit outside the town. And the

king granted the White Laund to Payn Peverel to hold of him for ever.'[1]

Sir Walter Scott tells a story, from Saxo Grammaticus, of a young man who was buried alive in the tomb of his dead brother. The corpse presently arose and attempted to feed on the living man. The pair closed in mortal combat, till at length the living brother gained the victory by driving a stake through the re-animated corpse.[2] Years had passed away, when the grave was one day opened. The survivor told the story to the astonished tomb-breakers, and then expired before their eyes. They took up his corpse and re-buried it, but burnt the body of the first brother.[3]

The story of Thorold Bœgifot, from the Eyrbyggja Saga,[4] is another case in point, showing what were the Icelandic ideas of the thirteenth century on the subject. Thorold Bœgifot was found dead one morning in his own dining-hall, and his terrified family suspected that he had died by his own hand. Arnkill his son, being summoned, approached the corpse from behind, dreading to look upon the face until certain (undescribed) propitiatory rites had been performed. Then with difficulty the corpse was removed from its place, the face was covered, and it was carried out through a breach made in the wall, behind the spot where the dead man had been found sitting. (This, says Sir Walter Scott, was still in his day a

[1] Abridged from the *History of Fulk Fitz Warine*, ed. by Thos. Wright, F.S.A., for the Warton Club, 1855.

[2] 'This,' says Sir Walter (*Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 104), 'affords a derivation of the ancient English law in the case of suicides, when a stake was driven through the coffin, originally to keep it secure in its tomb.' This very reason for the practice was alleged by the teller of the story of the 'Drumby Hole' in our last chapter. Compare HUNT, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, I. 292. In *Mabinogion* we find that if a stake of mountain ash be driven through the corpses on a battlefield, they can no longer be animated by demons, but will instantly turn to worms. Notes to *Mabinogion*, Vol. III. 137.

[3] Mr. Baring-Gould refers to no less than eight Sagas in which the hero descends into a tomb, fights with the inhabitant, who has now acquired a demoniacal nature, overcomes him, and robs him of his treasure.—*Curious Myths*, 2nd Series, p. 43.

[4] JAMIESON, *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities*, pp. 497, 498. The abstract of the Eyrbyggja Saga (from which I quote) was made by Sir Walter Scott.

Scottish custom at the burial of a suicide: otherwise the house was in danger of being haunted.) The body was then conveyed to a strongly-built tomb. 'But these meet honours, and this grave, however fortified, could not appease the restless spirit of Thorold Bœgifot. He appeared in the district by night and by day, slew men and cattle, and harrowed the country so much by his frequent apparition and mischievous exploits, that his son Arnkill, on the repeated complaints of the inhabitants, resolved to change his place of burial. The body of Thorolf was found on opening the tomb, but his aspect was fearful and grisly to a preternatural degree. He was placed on a bier between two strong oxen, which nevertheless were worn out with fatigue before they had transported him many miles. Others were substituted in their place, but when they attained the summit of a hill at some distance from the destined burial-place, they became frantic, and breaking their yokes, rushed down the precipice and perished. The corpse too became of such ponderous weight that it could by no means be transported any further, so that Arnkill was fain to consign it to the earth on the ridge of the hill where it lay, and which took its name henceforth from that of Bœgifot. Arnkill caused a mound of immense height to be piled above the grave, and Thorolf during the lifetime of his son remained quiet in the grave:' but after the death of Arnkill he again came forth from his tomb, slew herds and herdsmen, and spread terror throughout the neighbourhood. It was therefore resolved to destroy his corpse by fire. The tomb was opened, and the body, which was found swollen to an enormous size, was with difficulty conveyed to the seashore and there burnt to ashes.

These old Saga-stories all bear witness to another point, namely, a belief in the *local presence* of the dead in their graves. Many ages had to pass before mankind could thoroughly grasp the idea of the separation between soul and body. So they buried weapons and household vessels in the funeral mound, and sacrificed horses and slaves and even wives, at the burial of a chief, that he might have all he needed about him in the grave whither he was gone, and whence they continually feared that he might return.[1] Hence it

[1] See the Rev. J. C. Atkinson on *Ancient British Burial Mounds*, in the *Monthly Packet*, 2nd Series, Vol. IV. pp. 404, 510. Also Danish and North

comes, that the spirits of suicides are supposed to hover around the cross-roads where their bodies have been laid in the earth,[1] and the souls of the murdered to haunt, not their murderers, but the spot where they met their death.

The story of Helgi in the Elder Edda gives a touching picture of the whole heathen conception of the state of the dead, and remarkably corresponds with the popular ghost-lore of modern times.

Helgi, the husband of the fair Valkyr Sigrun, was slain by her brother in revenge for the death of their father, King Högni, who had fallen in the battle in which Helgi overcame Hödbrodd, to whom Sigrun had been promised in marriage. A mound was raised over his corpse, and he was appointed to a command in Valhalla in the heights of heaven. One evening, Sigrun's maid passing the tomb, saw Helgi riding towards it at the head of a goodly company.

'"Is it an illusion (she cries)
I chance to see,
Or the twilight of the Gods?
Do dead men ride?
Whither your horses
Urge ye with spurs?
Or have the heroes got
Leave to come home?"'

Then she goes and tells her mistress that the mound is open and the leader of his people, with wounds all bleeding, is calling for her to stanch the blood. Sigrun hurries to the tomb, and greets him warmly and lovingly.

'"The lifeless king
Kiss I will
Ere thou cast off
Thy bloody corselet—
Helgi, thy hair is
Full of rime-frost!
The hero's whole body
Dew of battle hath bathed,
Högni's friend hath
His hands water-cold!

German funeral customs, THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, II. 276, and III. 161. Compare GREGOR, *Folk-Lore of North-East Scotland*, p. 213.

[1] I believe that the reason why this was always the site chosen for a suicide's grave really was, at first, that the *cross* formed by the meeting roads might (*faute de mieux*) have a good effect in preventing 'coming again.'

—How shall I, king,
Free thee from this?" '

The dead Helgi replies to her—

' "Thou art the cause,
Sigrun of Seva,
That Helgi is bathed
In sorrow's dew.
Thou weepest, Gold-decked,
Sunbright South's daughter,
Cruel tears
Ere thou fallest asleep.
Each bloody tear
Falls on thy king's breast,
Ice-cold, piercing,
Swollen with grief."'

Yet he rejoices in her love and faithfulness in coming to him. She makes a bed in the mound, and remains with her hero till in the earliest dawn he departs, saying,

' "'Tis time now to ride
The reddening road,
To let my pale steed
Tread the air-path
O'er the bridges of heaven. [*i.e.* Bifrost, the rainbow.]
The sky must I reach
Ere the cock of the hall
Awaken the heroes."'

Next evening the maid tries to dissuade Sigrun from going to watch for her husband's return.

' "Be not so senseless,
Skiolding's daughter,
Alone to go
To the home of the dead.
All ghosts are
In the night-time
Stronger, O woman,
Than in the bright day." '

Sigrun goes to the mound, despite the maid's arguments; but she watches in vain—Helgi returns no more.

This pathetic story combines in one consistent whole most of the points of the heathen creed on the subject of death. We have the tears which awaken the dead [1]—the ghost vanishing at daybreak—the

[1] See *infra*, the Ballad beginning, 'Cold blows the wind;' and for some remarks on the subject, KELLY, *Indo-European Tradition*, p. 125, *et seq.*

hero living, as it were in captivity, in his grave-mound—and the midnight ride of the warriors; which (adding a dash of malevolence to the character of the ghost) is paralleled in our days by the nightly career of old Squire Blount. These wild riders, such as Squire Blount in his coach and four, or as Madam Pigott with her (doubtless) unchristened babe,[1] are no common vulgar suicides or murderers. In them 'the majesty of the old belief strives to rescue itself by clinging'[2] to persons of station removed above the common herd, on whom has descended the last fragments of the ancient creed as to the fate of heroes and warriors slain on the field of battle.[3]

A few 'chosen' ones might be favoured with a place in Valhalla in the upper air, but in ordinary cases the Land of the Dead is, in all mythologies, the Under World. Not a vague imaginary place, but, as was pointed out in the eighth chapter, a solid habitable land beneath the earth, accessible through hill-caverns or deep 'bottomless' pools. Here we have the reason why ghosts so often are supposed to appear out of the water, and why a spirit to be laid must be cast into the water, that thus it may the more readily go to its own place.[4] The Red Sea is apparently chosen as a larger body of water than any

[1] See HENDERSON (as before), p. 130. KELLY (as before), p. 272.

[2] DASENT, *Popular Tales from the Norse*, Introduction, p. xliii. This kind of ghost story may be paralleled in almost every county in England. After the death of Mr. John Wilkinson, 'the Father of the Iron Trade' in South Staffordshire, in the 18th century, there was a widespread belief in the neighbourhood that he would return from the grave to visit his works at Bradley. On the seventh anniversary of his death several thousand people assembled on Monmore Green, near Wolverhampton, expecting to see him come again *riding on his grey horse*. See his *Life*, published by Bridgen of Wolverhampton, and quoted in RANDALL'S *Salopian and West Midland Magazine* for December, 1875, p. 73.

[3] The reasons why ghosts wander have already been noticed. Either they have—by their own act or that of others—been hurried to their end before their appointed time, and thus find no place prepared for them; or else they are those whose lives have been too bad to fit them for a home anywhere, and who are therefore condemned to everlasting wandering. Indeed, considering the horror with which sudden death, without the rites of the Church, was formerly regarded (as it is still to a certain extent), it may be that these two classes of ghosts are but one after all, and that all who met their end 'unhouselled, disappointed, unaunealed,' were once thought unfit to find a resting-place in any of the kingdoms of the other world.

[4] See THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, I. 287-88.

inland pool, with a mysterious name too, and thus all the more likely to be effectual![1]

The part the candles play in the ceremony of ghost-laying seems obscure. Sometimes the ghost is cheated into a promise not to return till the candle is burnt out: the wily parson immediately blows it out and throws it into a pond or buries it in the earth. So Old Coles, the famous coach-and-four ghost of Leigh Court in Worcestershire, was treated,[2] and so the devil himself was outwitted in Danish and Netherlandish tradition.[3] Mr. Henderson has a Devonshire story, in which seven parsons sit candle in hand for half an hour, to lay the ghost of a deceased brother, but the candles burn out their time, so it is plain that none of the party can lay the ghost. They are his old acquaintance, of whom he stands in no sort of awe. At length comes a stranger, 'a scholar fresh from Oxford,' in whose hand the candle goes out at once, and he proceeds to lay the ghost in a beer-barrel.[4] This is curious, as in all our Shropshire stories the great point is to keep the candles lighted in spite of the ghost's utmost efforts to blow them out. On this head I will add one other story, a genuine bit of local tradition, handed down among educated persons for several generations. It is true that it concerns, not a ghost, but a devil; but all evil spirits are governed more or less by the same laws.

It must be now about a hundred and fifty years since a party of

[1] It does not seem to have been held sufficient, merely to command a ghost to retire thither. The rustics will gravely tell you how such and such an old country parson of byegone days, who probably was never out of England in his life, actually threw the bottle in which a ghost was imprisoned, into the Red Sea. No notion of the long journey which such a feat would entail seems ever to cross their minds.

[2] ALLIES, *Antiquities and Folk-Lore of Worcestershire*, p. 462, where are several stories (chiefly from the Athenæum) of *driving* ghosts in different counties.

[3] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, III. 258, and II. 182, where reference is made to Norse Sagas and Polish popular tales for a similar trick.

[4] HENDERSON (as before), p. 336. Here, the ghost must be laid by a stranger, and in a Devonshire story related by Allies (see above, note), the ghost's old friend, who 'knawed the trick,' is not to be trusted to lay him. But in the 'Roarin' Bull o' Bagbury,' Mr. Pigeon, the 'old blind parson as knowed him' is the successful one, as it is an advantage to him to be acquainted with the ghost's peculiarities.

young men assembled at a little inn near Wem, determined to try and raise the Devil. They drew a circle on the floor, and conjured him up into the middle of it, in the form of a bull, but to lay him again was not so easy. One parson after another made the attempt, but *a high wind blew out their candles* as soon as they were lighted. At length the Rev. Leonard Hotchkiss, Incumbent of Battlefield near Shrewsbury, came to the rescue, and either his skill, his piety, or his perseverance excelled that of his brethren, for he soon succeeded in compelling the Evil One to depart.[1]

We have ancient authority for the idea that ghosts have no power by candle-light. In one of the Sagas quoted by Mr. Baring-Gould, the tomb-breaking hero finds an old Viking sitting in his dragon ship, with his five hundred comrades motionless about him. He possesses himself of the dead men's treasure, and is about to depart, when *the taper goes out*, and they all rise and attack the intruder, who barely escapes by invoking St. Olaf's aid.

Ghosts, we know, cannot appear by daylight (though some of our most audacious spirits, indeed, 'came both night and day'), and probably the candle was supposed to have something of the nature of the sun's rays. Thus it was customary to burn candles about a corpse, as in the refrain, 'Fire and sleete and candlelight,' of the old Border dirge. But there may be some deeper connection between candles and the spirit-world than this. In German folk-lore, the burning and extinguishing of candles presages—nay, even accompanies—the life and death of man.[2] So, in the rite of excommunication by 'bell, book, and candle,' the putting out of the candle is a sign that the soul is cut off from the Church. 'A winding-sheet in the candle' is an omen of death, and the uneducated are apt to attach a superstitious importance to a candle going out in a death-chamber.[3]

[1] Mr. Hotchkiss became Head Master of Shrewsbury School—where he appears to have been educated himself—in 1735. It is said that he led Dr. Sacheverell's horse through Shrewsbury in 1710, when that worthy was on his way to take possession of his remote living of Selattyn. Sacheverell as a Christian name has survived in Shrewsbury almost to our own times.

[2] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, I. 291. Compare the Christmas fortune-telling game of 'Lebenschifflein.'

[3] This was Nancy of Longnor's pet superstition. When Mrs. — of the Moat Farm was seized with her last illness, she asked old Nancy to stay with her to

Whence comes the idea of laying a ghost in a bottle or a snuff-box, or some such tiny prison, it is hard to say. Few instances of it have been recorded by British folk-lore writers, still we hear from Montgomeryshire that the spirit of Lady Jeffreys, who for some undescribed reason 'could not rest in peace,' and 'troubled people dreadfully,' was at last 'persuaded to contract her dimensions and enter a bottle. She did so, after appearing in a good many hideous forms; but when once in the bottle it was corked down securely, and the bottle was thrown into the pool underneath the Short Bridge [over the Severn] in Llanidloes; and in the bottle she was to remain until the ivy that crept along the buttresses overgrew the sides of the bridge and reached the top of the parapet; then when this took place, she should be released from her bottle prison.'

'The ivy was dangerously near the top of the old Short Bridge when I was a boy,' says the Rev. Elias Owen,[1] from whom we quote this account, 'and often did I and others crop off its tendrils as they neared the top of the bridge. . . . Some thirty years ago, the Short Bridge was rebuilt, and a lad who was in school whom we called Ben, when the bridge was undergoing reconstruction, found by the side of the river a small bottle, and in the bottle was a little black thing that was never quiet a minute, but it kept going up and down continually, and to all appearance wanted to get out.' The writer called upon Ben to see the bottle, and was told that he had kept it safely for a while, but that he was afraid to do so any longer, for 'his relatives and neighbours came to the conclusion that that was the very bottle into which Lady Jeffreys had been cast, and that the little black bobbing thing was no other than the old lady herself. She was consequently resigned to the pool again, and there she is at present undergoing a prolonged but unjust term of imprisonment,' for the ivy which was to give the signal for her release would long

the end; and Nancy was accordingly watching by her bed-side, when suddenly the candle went out, and at the same moment the poor Missis went, and Nancy thought 'there was something in it, and don't you, Mr. L—, sir?'

[1] 'Folklore, Superstitions, etc. of Montgomeryshire,' in *Montgomeryshire Collections* (the organ of the Powysland Club), Vol. XV. Part I. p. 135. A collection of original notes, much to be commended to the notice of the Folk-Lore Society; for a sight of which we are indebted to the kindness of the author.

before have reached the top of the bridge, had not its growth been checked by Mr. Owen and his schoolfellows, who lived in dread of Lady Jeffreys' return!

Every reader will by this time have been reminded of the story of the Fisherman and the Genie in the Arabian Nights. How the fisherman drew out of the sea a brazen bottle sealed with the magic seal of Suleyman Ben Daood, how from it there issued an enormous Genie who threatened the fisherman with death, how the latter in this strait bethought him of doubting the Genie's ability to enter so small a vessel, and how the affronted Genie returned thither to vindicate his power, and so placed himself again at his captor's mercy.

The astrologers of old pretended to have the power, here ascribed to Solomon, the wisest of mankind, of compelling a spirit to enter a crystal, a jewel, or a mirror, and of binding it to their service. Astrology came to us from the East, and the first European astrologers were ecclesiastics. Possibly they mingled something of astrological lore with priestly exorcism, and thus our Western 'bottle-imps' may have travelled to us by a very direct route. Whether this be so or not, the Fisherman's stratagem reappears in an English popular tale (*Folk-Lore Record*, II. 176), which comes to us on the unimpeachable authority of the late Thomas Wright, F.S.A., and the scene of which is evidently laid at Ludlow in Shropshire.

'There lived in the town of —, in that part of England which lies towards the borders of Wales, a very curious simple kind of a man; though, simple as he seemed, people all said there was more cunning in him than there appeared to be, and that he knew a good deal that other people did not know. Now there was in the same town a certain large and very old house, and one of the rooms was haunted by a ghost, which not only hindered people from making any use of that room, but was also very troublesome to them in other ways. The man whom I have just mentioned was reported to be very clever at dealing with ghosts, and the owner of the haunted house, by the advice of some of his friends, sent for him and asked him if he could undertake to make the ghost quit the house. Tommy, for that was the name the man generally went by,

agreed to do this, on condition that he should have with him in the room which the ghost frequented, three things, an empty bottle, a bottle of brandy with a tumbler, and a pitcher of water. So Tommy had a fine fire in the room, for it was a cold winter evening, and he locked the door safely in the inside, and sat down to pass the night drinking brandy and water.

'Well, just as the clock struck twelve, he was roused by a slight noise, and looking up, lo! there was the ghost standing before him. Says the ghost, "Well, Tommy, how are ye?" "Pretty well, thank ye," says he, "but pray how did ye know my name?" "Oh, very well indeed," said the ghost. "And how did ye get in?" "Oh, very easily." "Not through the door, I'm sure." "No, not at all, but through the key-hole." "D'ye say so? none of your tricks upon me; I won't believe you came through the key-hole." "Won't ye? but I did." "I'm sure you can't get through the keyhole." "I'm sure I can." "Well then," says Tommy, pointing to the empty bottle, which he pretended to have emptied, "if you can come through the keyhole you can get into this bottle, but I won't believe you can do either."

'Now the ghost began to be very angry that Tommy should doubt his powers of getting into the bottle, so he asserted most confidently that the thing was easy to be done. "No," said Tommy, "I won't believe it till I have seen you get in." "Here goes then," said the ghost, and sure enough, into the bottle he went, and Tommy corked him up quite tight, so that he could not get out, and he took the bottle to the bridge where the river was wide and deep, and he threw the bottle exactly over the keystone of the middle arch into the river, and the ghost was never heard of after."

CHAPTER XIII.

WITCHCRAFT.

"The hag is astride
This night for to ride,
The devill and shee together:
Through thick and through thin,
Now out and now in,
Though ne'r so foule be the weather."

HERRICK'S *Hesperides.*

"The witches belong to the retinue of ancient goddesses, who—fallen from their thrones and changed from good and adorable beings to fiendish and fearful ones,—wander restlessly about during the hours of night, and in place of the old festive processions hold secret unlawful meetings with their adherents."

GRIMM, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1007.

IT may safely be affirmed that in every heathen nation there have been persons—be they priests, magicians, witches, prophetesses, medicine-men, or what not—devoted to the service of the gods, who professed to be able by their aid to discover the secrets of the future, and by means of spells and incantations of which they alone knew the art, to turn the wrath or the favour of the patron god towards any one whom they might wish to injure or to benefit. Such, broadly stated, is the original theory of Witchcraft, and it was a very small advance upon it, when these favourites of the gods were supposed to be themselves endued with divine powers of journeying invisibly from place to place, and of controlling the movements of man.

'Even when the mass of the people was won over to the new [Christian] teaching,' continues Grimm, in the passage above quoted, 'solitary persons here and there might for some time remain true to the old faith, and in secret perform their heathen rites.' And even

when these were dead, there is ample proof that the 'ineradicable knowledge' of heathen magic yet lingered, kept alive by a thousand popular sayings, popular errors, popular customs. The Church tried to extirpate it in vain: and all the while the 'creative imagination of mankind' exaggerated the supposed powers of the witches, confused their doings with traditions of the deities they had worshipped, and finally evolved the monstrous idea of the compact with the Devil and all its horrible accompaniments.

Centuries seem to have passed before any one doubted either the possibility or the efficacy of dealings with evil spirits. Denunciations of unlawful spells and charms (many of them resembling those in use among the more ignorant of the peasantry now-a-days) are found in abundance in early Homilies and Penitentiaries. Charlemagne issued various edicts against witchcraft. In the fourteenth century the whole order of the Knights Templars were adjudged to be guilty of it, and in the fifteenth century it begins to make a great figure in history. Innocent VIII. published a Bull against it in 1484. Joan of Arc was accused of it; so in the same century was Jane Shore. Joan, the wife of Henry IV., was imprisoned for it, Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester, did penance for it. There was hardly a learned man, from Friar Bacon to Doctor Faustus, who was not supposed to have sold his soul to the Devil for a knowledge of the Black Art.

The Roman Church classed witchcraft with heresy, as a worshipping of false gods. The followers of Calvin, resenting the accusation and having no priests to exorcise the supposed victims, gave their utmost energies to the discovery and punishment of the imaginary crime. To their influence must be ascribed the horrible persecution which disgraced England and Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and made it hardly possible for any poor solitary old crone to live unharmed and free from suspicion.[1] James I., brought up in the focus of Calvinism, was a firm believer in witch-

[1] March, 1579-80. 'One Mother Gawen of the Castle-foregate was punished in the corn-market for going about to bewitch and enchant a cat of hers [with] a disease from her neighbour's sow; and yet notwithstanding the sow died of the said disease.' MS. Chron. of Shrewsbury in OWEN and BLAKEWAY'S *History*, I. 562.

craft. To him we owe the Act of 1604, making the practice of it an offence *per se*, without regard to the motive for which it was employed. Before his accession to the English throne he had already in 1597 published his *Demonologie* to prove the reality of the crime and the duty of punishing it with the utmost severity.

For even while the persecution was highest, the very existence of the crime for which so many were suffering began to be called in question. Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, published in 1584, maintained that no such powers as were alleged could possibly exist, and denounced the practices of the 'witchmongers' who professed to be able to discover the criminals. But on the accession of King James, as many copies as possible of this book were solemnly burnt, and the tide did not turn till more than fifty years later. However, after the Restoration the prosecution of witches was discountenanced by the highest authorities in the law, and the habit of witch ordeals and witch trials gradually died out in Great Britain. But it was not till 1751 that James the First's Act was repealed, in the indignation awakened by a horrible case of drowning a witch at Tring. Yet some sixty years after this, Sir Walter Scott could write, 'At least one hypochondriacal patient is known to the author who believes himself the victim of a gang of witches, and ascribes his illness to their charms, so that he wants nothing but an indulgent judge to wake again the old ideas of sorcery.'[1]

It is to be feared that this is only too true in England at the present day, though it is a great advance that the witch's powers are now chiefly supposed to be limited to causing diseases.

The county of Salop is no exception to the rule of superstition. The late vicar of a parish on the Clee Hills, startled to find that his parishioners still believed in witchcraft, once proposed to preach a sermon against it, but he was dissuaded from doing so by the parish schoolmaster, who assured him that the belief was so deeply rooted in the people's minds that he would be more likely to alienate them from the Church than to weaken their faith in witchcraft.

The colliery population have the credit of being specially prone

[1] *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2nd edition, p. 332, from which the greater part of the foregoing facts are taken.

to this form of superstition. 'A man visibly sinking under consumption' (writes a Wellington correspondent now deceased) 'will maintain that such a person has done him harm, otherwise *put a spell* on him, and will travel long distances to visit a conjurer and pay large sums of money to have the spell removed.'

A public official of Oakengates, in the same neighbourhood, wrote as follows to *Shreds and Patches*, under date July 14th, 1875:

'On Saturday last a man, apparently between seventy and eighty years of age, entered my office and asked me to write him a letter; having given my consent and inquired into the subject, he told me his wife (a woman nearly eighty years of age) was very ill, also that his daughter had two children ill, and that he believed they were suffering from some witchcraft, and he wanted a letter written to a Mrs. P— of Wellington, who was a wise and good woman, to ask her to put a stop to it. He said he had a pig, and he was afraid that would also be bewitched. I asked him if Mrs. P— was a witch? He answered, she was a wise woman, and only used her knowledge to stop others doing wrong. He should not send her any money in the letter, he should pay her a shilling or eighteenpence after his next pay. Finding it useless to reason with him I wrote the following from his dictation:—

'"From the old man and his daughter at Donnington Wood. The daughter's two children are ill, and the old woman is ill, and I want you to stop it. The old man has got a pig and he hopes you will stop anything being done to that, and one of us will see you this week end."

'I asked him what name I should sign, he said that no name was wanted, she would know who it was from.

A lady correspondent sends us the following amusing story:—

'The Rector of Enville [Staffordshire], a parish on the (south-east) edge of this county (Salop), was sent for a few years ago to read and pray over a young woman who was said to be suffering sadly from being overlooked; by whom, could not be discovered, else they would have taken his blood, when the sufferer would have got well at once. She was reduced to a skeleton, and had almost lost her faculties. However, after reading the most suitable passages he could find, every few days, and dosing her with port wine and soup in the

intervals, she recovered nicely; and he got much pressed to undertake the same duty for others, but he always refused, saying he could do no good to any one beyond his own parish.'

One Bessie Tomlinson of Edgmond Marsh, who died within the last seven years, was for many years before her death afflicted by one of those long, lingering, mysterious diseases which are so commonly set down to the effects of witchcraft. 'The doctors could make nothink on her,' but *she* knew very well what was the matter, she said! Among her neighbours was one Challoner, also of Edgmond Marsh, whose character as a witch was well known. Not long before she was taken ill, he had asked her to lend him some money, but she refused, saying that 'she had none to lend.' And she and her neighbours were quite convinced that, in consequence of this, Challoner had 'put a spell on her,' and caused her strange illness. 'And sometimes the pains 'll tek her,' said one of the village dames, 'till her canna hold herself straight, and her'll cry out! for the pains a'n [= are][1] like to go through her—and that's when the witch has gotten his grip on her. And sure, he must ha' had dealin's wi' the Divvle, *what else?*'

Challoner removed to Wolverhampton during the course of the poor woman's illness, but his power did not cease with his presence, and other and later cases of severe and wasting illness were by many ascribed to his malice. He and a sister who lived with him were both reputed to be witches, 'but the brother was the worst o' the two. And nobody durst cross them nor refuse them nothing, for fear they should be bewitched.' A family who went to live in Edgmond in 1854, in ignorance of the estimation in which Challoner was held, employed him to kill pigs for them, as occasion required. Great was the horror of a young Edgmond woman who shortly afterwards entered their service. 'She could never fancy the bacon, she was sure!' In June, 1872, some time after he had left the parish, he came begging to the door of the same family, and the servants hurried anxiously to their mistress, asking her by all means to give him something. Not that they thought he could hurt them exactly, but it was better to be on the safe side!

[1] See verb To Be in *Shropshire Word-Book*, p. lxxiv.

I have not heard the word 'witch' applied to a man in any other part of the county, but it is so used in the 'Porkington Manuscript,' a compilation of the fifteenth century, preserved at Brogyntyn, or Porkington, Lord Harlech's seat near Oswestry.

'In fayth, y trow, he be a *wyche*,
He dothe me mykyle grame.'[1]

In olden times, we know, the accusation of witchcraft was often brought against ladies of rank, but since the sixteenth century the imputation has been chiefly confined to poor miserable old women, so it is rather surprising to hear that within the present century a lady of independent means who lived in the village of Edgmond, was commonly believed to be a witch. She was probably an eccentric and unpopular character, for she is remembered by the disrespectful nickname of 'old Dolly L—,' and it is reported that she habitually dressed in short skirts, a 'bedgown' (*i. e.* a short loose jacket), and a high steeple-crowned hat, 'just for all the world like the picture of an old witch.' So firm was the belief in her malevolence, that even the gifts she used to send to a poor old woman in the place, were supposed to be offerings to a more powerful witch than herself, to engage her to perform feats of witchcraft for her, which she was not able to achieve herself!

From the other side of the county, the Right Rev. W. Walsham How, Bishop of Bedford, formerly Rector of Whittington near Oswestry, writes as follows, in 1872:—

'Soon after I came to this parish (Whittington) in 1851, an old woman named Kitty Williams, who lived close to the Rectory, fell ill. At the same time Mrs. Walsham How was ill for some time. In calling one day at a small farmhouse in Babin's Wood, a Mrs. M—, who lived there, in speaking of my wife's illness, said 'she hoped we were very kind to Kitty Williams.' I asked why she said so, and she told me, because Kitty had the evil eye, and she thought she had probably made my wife ill. She then related the following strange

[1] *Early English Miscellanies*, ed. by J. O. Halliwell for the Warton Club, 1855, p. 54. The male witches of Cornwall seem to be a kind of wizards or 'conjurers' of singularly limited powers. R. HUNT, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, Vol. II. 74.

story. When Kitty Williams was young, she lived with a family in this neighbourhood, but was sent away for some misconduct. She soon afterwards married, and came to live where I knew her. From the time she left service, everything went wrong where she had lived: cows dying, horses going lame, &c., &c. So the people consulted a wise-woman, who told them to get a pair of black horses with long tails and drive them about the country till they stopped of themselves, and when they did so, to give the first woman they saw whatever she asked for. They did get the horses, and drove about till the horses stopped opposite Kitty Williams's cottage close to Whittington Rectory. Kitty came out, and they greeted their old servant, and asked her what present she would like. She said, a shawl; so they drove to Oswestry and bought her one, and from that day all things prospered with them. This was told me with the most serious conviction of its truth.'

It is common in Folk-lore stories to find that horses become aware of the presence of evil spirits when men cannot discover them. Everywhere, too, the witches or 'night hags' will ride horses whose stables are not protected by charms. Perhaps *black* horses are especially subject to their power, and thus recognized their mistress at once.[1]

The means by which the witches worked evil—namely, by obtaining possession of something belonging to the victim—appears in a curious form in the following anecdote, which was told me in 1881, by Mrs. Sarah Dudley of Abbey Cottage, Much Wenlock.[2]

'A woman was going along a road with a child in her arms, which was eating an apple. Another woman, well-known to be a

[1] In *Popular Tales from the Norse* (p. 342), 'Farmer Weathersky,' a degenerate version of Odin, the god of the rushing winds, captures the lad 'Jack' transformed into the shape of a black horse, when the latter has escaped in the forms of a bay and a brown one. Again, in 'The Widow's Son' an enchanted prince in the shape of a black horse is found in captivity to a Troll (*ibid.* p. 390).

[2] I cannot refrain from saying how much this book is indebted to this charming old dame. Quite superior to superstition herself, her observant mind and excellent memory have, in the course of a long life spent at Clee St. Margaret, Bridgnorth, Easthope, and other places in South Shropshire, garnered up a vast store of queer old-world stories and ideas, which she poured forth readily for the use of the present work.

witch, came behind her and took the apple from the child's hand, bit a piece out of it, and returned it. The child was fat and healthy till then, but from that day it never throve again, and pined and pined away till it died.'

It is not often, of late years, that we find any misfortune besides sickness set down to the influence of witches. Still, one or two droll instances of other effects of witchcraft have come to my knowledge. Somewhere about the year 1860, a woman of Dawley in the Collieries, who was a maker of *pikelets* (a kind of crumpet, see *Shropshire Word-Book*) by occupation, went to live in a newly-built house, which belonged to a clergyman, and therefore one would think was tolerably well warranted to be free from witchcraft. No such thing. In a very short time she gave notice to leave, declaring that the house was bewitched, for she could not make pikelets in it! However, she was, I believe, at last persuaded to stay.

A certain old Mrs. Mansell, living on the lime-kiln bank at Longnor (near Leebotwood), declares that she is bewitched now. Something comes creep, creeping, up her every night as soon as she is in bed, and nothing will stop it. She took the Bible and Prayer-book with her to bed, and all the hymn-books in the house too, but it did no good. Then a neighbour gave her a leaf out of the Bible for a charm, and she folded it and put it on her heart. But that did no good either. Then she took the rolling-pin and *throshed* and *throshed* the bed right well before she got into it, but that was no more good than anything else had been. And when last heard of, she still continued bewitched.[1]

Long ago, however, witches are reported to have done much more wonderful feats than these. In the beginning of the present century there lived in Little Drayton an old woman named Jane, or Jean, Salvage, whose reputation for witchcraft is not yet forgotten. The story goes that one harvest-time, Jean and her neighbour women were busy 'leasing'[2] when the churlish farmer in whose field they

[1] The Parson to whom she told her story, considering the general appearance of her house, ventured to suggest *fleas* as the cause of her troubles, but she was very indignant with him. She was 'as *clen* as *clen*, it was nothing o' that, no indeed!'

[2] Leasing = gleaning. See *Shropshire Word-Book*.

were at work, came up and bade them go away. That was a worse misfortune for himself than for them, for from that hour neither man nor beast could work for him, and all his harvest was at a standstill. For some days this strange dead-lock continued, till at last the farmer sent for Jean, and told her she might 'lease' as much as she liked. Then the spell with which she had bewitched him and his was removed, and all went right.[1]

About the same date, a family of the name of Ambler occupied a farm at Wilderley near Pulverbatch, and in a little cottage in a neighbouring dale lived an old woman commonly called 'Betty Chidley from the bottom of Betchcot,' who was much in the habit of begging at the farmhouse, and generally got what she asked for. One day Betty came on her usual errand, and found the farmer's wife mixing some 'supping'[2] for the calves. She watched the good meal and milk stirred together over the fire, took a fancy to it, and begged for a share. Mrs. Ambler, rather vexed, spoke sharply, and refused to give her any. Betty only said in a meaning tone, '*The calves wunna eat the suppin' now.*'

Little notice was taken of her speech at the time, but when the maid carried out the pail of carefully prepared 'supping' to the calves, they utterly refused to touch it. Three times over was the attempt made to give it them, but in vain.

Then Betty's ominous words were called to mind, and as quickly as might be she was sent for to the farm, and desired to bless the calves. 'Me bless your calves!' she said, 'what have I to do with your calves?' but at last she yielded to their entreaties, and said, 'My God bless the calves.' But the creatures still refused to eat. Then Mrs. Ambler begged her to leave out the word *my*. After much pressure she gave way, and consented to repeat the simple words, 'God bless the calves.' Mrs. Ambler then herself took the 'supping' to the hungry calves, and to her delight they came to meet her at the door of their house, and ate their food with hearty appetite. The story has been handed down in the family ever since, and was related to the present writer by a great-grand-daughter of

[1] Narrated by Mr. T. P. Marshall.

[2] See *Shropshire Word-Book.*

Mr. and Mrs. Ambler, who had it from her great-aunt, one of their daughters.'[1]

The belief that the witches were really worshippers of 'the great Sathanas' comes out even more clearly in the next anecdote, related by Mrs. Dudley.

There was an old witch named Priss Morris, who lived at Cleobury North. She had a grudge against one of the farmers of the place, because he had stopped her from leasing in his fields. One day, not long after, his waggoner was going along the road with the waggon and horses, and suddenly the horses stopped short, right *anunst* [opposite] the witch's house. It was a good road and a level, there was nothing to hinder them, but there they stopped, and stood still.

The waggoner shouted at them, and took his whip and thrashed them, but they did not move. Then the master came up. 'Jack,' says he, 'why dunna yo' tak them 'orses on?' 'I canna, maister; they wunna move.' 'I'll soon get 'em to move,' says he, and he took the lad's whip and flogged and flogged the poor horses worse than ever, but it was no use. Then he says, 'Here's bin an owd witch, but I'll witch her!' and up he goes to the woman's house with the whip in his hand, and knocks on the door with the whip-handle, and old Priss Morris come out.

'Whad 'n yo' bin doin' at my 'orses?' says he. 'I anna bin doing nothing at your horses,' says she. 'Yes, you 'an,' says he, 'here's a good road and a level, and they canna get by your house, let me thrash 'em as much as I like. Yo'n bin doin' summat at 'em,' he says, 'and if yo' dunna tak it off 'em again, I'll flog you till you canna stir from the spot.' 'I anna done nothing at them,' she says again. 'Yes, you 'an,' he says; 'now, you say "Pray God bless you and your horses," or I'll flog you till you canna stand.' 'No, no!' she says, 'I canna say it.' 'You just say it,' he says, 'or I'll serve you the same as them poor horses.'

'*My* God bless you and your horses! I'll say that,' she says. 'No, no, that wunna do,' he says. 'I'll have nothing to do with

[1] See NAPIER'S *Folk-Lore of the West of Scotland*, p. 81, for an almost exactly similar story.

your God,' he says; 'I worship the true God, and I'll have nothing to do with no other. You say, "May God bless you and your horses!"' 'May God bless you and your horses!' she says. And the horses started off again that very minute and took the load right straight home.

This sudden checking of the powers of motion,[1] which forms so great a feature of Shropshire witchcraft, appears in the Welsh *Mabinogion*. Four of Arthur's knights attempted to draw blood from the witch Orddu, but she kicked and cuffed all who entered her cave, and 'not one of them could stir from the spot until they placed them all upon Llamrei, Arthur's mare.'[2]

'The idea that persons could by magic be fixed to the spot, without the power of stirring from it,' appears in some of the Icelandic Sagas.[3] In Schleswig-Holstein the feat is in more modern times supposed to be performed by a *written* spell, and thus is called 'Fast-writing.' A certain man whose house had been broken into, quietly surrendered his money to the thieves, and then *wrote them fast* as they sat at the table counting it. There they had to remain until the police arrived and took them into custody. Another man, who had had cabbages stolen from his garden, wrote the thief fast just as he was in the act of getting over the fence with the stolen goods on his back, and kept him bestriding it all Sunday, a spectacle for the congregation going to and from church.[4]

[1] In the story of King Edmund, printed in Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Primer*, we are told how eight thieves came one night to rob the shrine of the church where the saint was buried. In the middle of their operations, whilst one was on a ladder, another was stooping to dig, etc., the saint suddenly bound each of them fast so that they could not stir; and so they were all caught next morning, each having remained all night in one position: "ælc on his weorce wæs fæste gebunden" = each at his work was *fast-bound*.—W. W. S.

[2] *Mabinogion*, Vol. II. 317. For anecdotes of horses and vehicles mysteriously stopped on the road, see ALLIES, *Antiquities and Folk-Lore of Worcestershire*, p. 462, and GREGOR, *Folk-Lore of North-East Scotland*, p. 32. A witch in the form of a toad prevents a boat from moving, THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, III. p. 278. Compare also *Folk-Lore Record*, I. 23; *Border Minstrelsy*, II. 398; and (especially) F. H. GROOME, *In Gipsy Tents*, p. 11.

[3] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, I. 218.

[4] *Northern Mythology*, III. 14, where also is a story of *fast-reading*, self-performed. In the same volume are three long spells from Swinemunde, in Pomerania, 'to fix a thief.'

Mr. Henderson tells us how Nan Hardwick, the Witch of Danby in Cleveland, fixed the overseer who had refused to give her parish-relief, in the middle of a certain foot-bridge, whence he could not stir; and how Auld Wrightson, the Wise Man of Stokesley, fixed two young men, who had proposed to 'have a bit o' sport' with him, to their chairs in front of a roaring fire; and suggests that 'consciously or unconsciously, these worthies practised something like electro-biology.'[1] The following story of 'the Man with the Evil Eye' rather bears out his idea.

This man, whose name it is thought better to suppress, was a farmer at Child's Ercall, in North-east Salop, about a generation ago. He was noted for 'having the evil eye,' and for 'having dealings with the devil.' He could, it was believed, make people who displeased him go in a direction exactly contrary to that they themselves wished or intended. One day a party of morris-dancers called at the village inn, where our hero happened to be sitting. After going through their performance, one of the dancers snatched up the horn of ale which stood before the farmer, and emptied it at a draught. The latter said nothing. He merely *cast a glance* on the impertinent youth, and soon afterwards the strollers left the house. They had not gone far when the ale-drinker was brought to a stand-still. His comrades called 'Come on!' but he replied, 'I canna! there is a wall afore me, and it wunna let me move.' The others laughed at him and left him to his fate. He strove to follow them, but in vain. He was rooted to the spot, and when at length he could move again, it was only to retrace his steps to the presence of the man whom he had affronted, and who did not let him go till the following morning.

The 'man with the evil eye' and two others, his friends, were in the habit, every New Year's Eve, of watching at the church door at midnight, to learn during their vigil whose corpse would be carried through the door in the course of the coming twelvemonth. Our hero was believed to possess other magical powers in addition to his powerful 'eye.' One very dark night, his servant-man was driving him home in his 'trap' (or gig) from the public-house where he had spent the evening. Just as they reached the Leather Lad Pit—a

[1] *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 218.

suggestive name, of which I have been unable to learn the history—he asked the man if he would like to *see summat*. The latter in a great hurry replied *No*, but his master, taking no notice, got down from the trap, stood in the middle of the road, and muttered a spell. Immediately afterwards, the man saw a carriage and pair driven right over the hedge into the road, across the road, over the opposite hedge, and away across the fields. Having thus successfully 'called spirits from the vasty deep,' the farmer got into his trap again and drove home.

It seems to have been supposed that he acquired his supernatural powers by absolute hand-to-hand combats with the Prince of Darkness. It was said that persons walking about the lanes at night not unfrequently heard scuffling sounds as of two strong men wrestling together, after which they were sure presently to meet the man with the evil eye, with his clothes disarranged as if fresh from a hard struggle. But his opponent was never to be seen, and the only conclusion the folk could come to, was that their evil-eyed neighbour had had a tussle with Satan himself.

The power of the Evil Eye may almost be called a world-wide superstition. It is even alluded to in the New Testament:—'Is *thine eye evil* because I am good?'[1] It is as prevalent in Italy as in the Hebrides, and even more so in the East than in Europe. Yet it has been known in England from the earliest times of which we have any record. It is mentioned in *Beowulf*:—

'Now is the bloom of thy strength
for a little while.
Soon will it be
that sickness or the sword
* * * *
or javelin's flight
or ugly age
or *glance of eye[s]*
Shall [oppress and] darken thee.'[2]

'Some person's eies are very offensive,' says old Aubrey, with his

[1] St. Matthew xx. 15. See Archbishop Trench's note on this passage, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 187.

[2] *Beowulf*, l. 3520, quoted by J. M. KEMBLE, *Saxons in England*, Vol. I. p. 431.

usual ready credulity. '*Non possum dicere quare;* there is aliquid divinum in it, more than every one understands.'[1]

It is much to be suspected that brilliant and piercing eyes, having the power of fascination, were originally attributes of divinity, which in course of time sorcerers and witches gained the credit of possessing.[2] The power of transforming themselves into animals is another mark of divinity which has descended to the witches' sisterhood, who appear as hares and cats in numberless stories.

An old witch who is said to have long ago inhabited Bridgnorth Castle—or rather, perhaps, one of the rock-dwellings in the cliff below it—used to change herself into both of these animals in turn, and the dogs would 'run her,' but never caught her. 'I suppose they could'n never ketch them sort o' things,' said Mrs. Seamer, the good woman of the cave-dwelling on the opposite cliff (who, after much profession of disbelief in witchcraft, told how, when a child, she was taken to see her father's cousin on the Titterstone Clee, a young woman who wasted away till she was mere skin and bone, from the spells of an old witch. The girl's friends besought the old woman to 'take it off her,' but she never would do so, and the girl at last pined away and died).

In the same cliff with Mrs. Seamer's quaint dwelling, and with the Hermitage of which she is the proud guardian, is a third and very much smaller cavern, called the Witch's Cave. Tradition tells that here, long ago, lived a witch who often brought horses and waggons to a standstill when they reached that part of the (very steep) road which is opposite her cave. Out of this hole,—for it is no more—we are told, the old hag 'fled' every night on her broomstick, and we cannot help fancying her joining her opposite neighbour the hare-woman, in the meadows by Severn side, where the latter was wont to disport herself.

Grimm considers the broomstick ride to be a comparatively late addition to the characteristics of the witches. In early times, when they still retained many of the qualities of the goddesses, they

[1] *Remains of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (Folk-Lore Society), p. 80.

[2] *E. g.* Thor going in disguise to the Giant Thrym is recognized by his fiery eyes. See PIGOTT, *Scandinavian Mythology* (p. 44), quoting Professor Magnussen.

travelled through the air on animals—*e. g.*, a calf or a cat—as the deities of the Northmen bestrode a bear, a wolf, or a boar. In the earliest account in which a journey on a staff occurs, the witch transforms it into a horse.[1] Evidently the belief that witches steal their neighbours' horses to ride by night is one of the oldest parts of the witch-system. The tangled 'elf-locks' in horses' manes are still called 'witches' stirrups' among the Clee Hills, where the following anecdote was heard in 1873 :—

'A waggoner w'en a went to sup up, used to fine 'is 'orses in a lather. 'E couldna mak out whad wuz the raison. Sŏo a wentun to a wise-ŏŏman, an' 'er toud 'im to watch, for it wuz the witch as wuz ridin' 'em; sŏo a watched an' watched, but a sid nuthin, an' the 'orses wun i' the same fettle every night. But at last a sid a bit o' straw a-top on one o' thar necks, an' sŏo a laid out on it, an' tŏok it, an' sed some charm the ŏŏman 'ad touden 'im. An' then a chucked it o' the fire, and the owd witch wuz sid gwine up the chimdy on a brŏŏmstick.'[2]

Grimm [p. 1037] gives a collection of verbal spells, supposed to enable the enchanted steeds to take their flight through the air.

'Tout, tout!
Throughout and about!'

is his English specimen.

'Up and go!
Not too high, nor too low!'

is a German one. One of Mrs. Dudley's anecdotes furnishes us with another variety.

'Two old witches met together to ride on their broomsticks, and one taught the other to say before starting

"Over thick and over thin
Till we come to Hegmore's Ind."

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[1] *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1006, 1037, 1039.

[2] Taken *verbatim* from Miss Jackson's MSS. Compare HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, 193, and *Folk-Lore Record*, I. 24; also THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, II. 170, and III. 75. Elves are supposed to play the same prank: see HUNT, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, I. 74, for a modern instance. Herrick attributes the tangled manes to witches.

Froissart tells how the Lord of Corasse had a familiar spirit, who being desired to show himself, did so in the form of two straws twirling together on the floor. See THOMS, *Lays and Legends of France*, p. 51.

But she made a mistake and said

> "*Through* thick and *through* thin
> Till we come to Hegmore's Ind."

So she was dragged through the mire, and torn and draggled almost to bits.'[1]

'Where is Hegmore's End?' I asked, as Mrs. Dudley finished her story, 'is it anywhere near here?'

'Oh, I don't know where it is,' said she. 'I suppose it would be *one of their places*, some place of their own.'

Wherever 'Hegmore's End' (=*Hag-moor* End) may be, the site of one of the meeting-places of the Shropshire witches may be affirmed without much doubt. Mr. Wright tells us that every year on the longest night all the ghosts in Shropshire 'and the counties beyond' meet on the highest point of the Stiperstones to choose their king.[2] He supposes that 'in the term "ghosts" is included spiritual beings of all kinds, and perhaps witches:' and that the Stiperstones must be added to the list of those lonely mountain crags where the witches held their annual revels. The Blocksberg in the Harz Mountains is but one of many such rendezvous, though, so far as I know, the Malkin Tower on Pendle Hill in Lancashire and the Witches' Rock at Trewa in Cornwall, are the only *English* ones which have hitherto been recorded. But whether ghosts or witches haunt the Stiperstones makes little difference. It is a very slender line which separates 'Madam Pigott' and her compeers from the 'equestrian night-hags.' All alike are descendants of the goddesses

[1] Compare the 'Thorough bush and thorough briar' of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Herrick's lines, *ante*, p. 144.

Parallel stories are in THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, III. 81 (German), and *Folk-Lore Record*, I. 75 (Basque). [The theory mentioned here, that the tale 'was originally French,' and that 'the blunder consists in confusing *dessus* and *dessous*,' is surely untenable. The mishaps of the half-taught magician form the theme of so many stories, *e. g.*, THORPE, III. 68, and HENDERSON, 197, (Scotch), and note.] Compare also THORPE, III. 235 (Netherlandish), and the story of 'Todley Tom,' and note on it, in our next chapter.

[2] *Collectanea Archæologica*, Vol. I. Part I. Is 'the longest night' a mistake for the *shortest* night? or is it really a hitherto unnoticed date for the witches' yearly assemblage? The great season for ghosts, in Durham, is between St. Thomas's Eve and Christmas Eve. HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 326.

whom the lively imagination of primitive man supposed to be 'visible to their believing votaries in the shifting clouds about the summits of the mountains.'[1]

A woman of Cheadle, Staffordshire, lately told the following story, adding that her father knew the old witch well.

There was a woman who lived near Cheadle, who went to the mill one day to get a bag of flour for baking, and as she came back she met an old witch. 'Good day,' said the witch. 'Good day,' said the woman again. 'What's that you've got on your head?' said the witch. 'It's flour I'm taking home for my baking,' said the woman. 'It isn't flour, it's manure,' said the witch. 'It's good sound flour!' said the woman, 'I've fetched it straight from the mill, and I'm going to bake with it as soon as ever I get home.' 'It's nothing at all but a bag of manure,' said the witch, and off she went.

Now the woman knew very well that it was flour she had in her bag, but this made her feel so uncomfortable that as soon as the witch was out of sight, she put down the bag off her head and opened it and looked in. And there, sure enough, it was not flour at all, nothing but manure!

Well, she thought, as she had carried it so far, she might as well carry it all the way, so she took it up again and went home, and set it down by the pig-sty. In the evening her husband came home.

'Whatever have you put that bag of flour down by the pig-sty for?' he said, as soon as he came into the house. 'Oh,' said she, 'that's not flour, that's only a bag of manure.' 'Nonsense!' said he, 'what are you talking of? I tell you it's flour. Why, it's sheeding [spilling] all over the place!' So they went to look, and there actually it was flour again the same as at first, and they took it into the house, and very glad the woman was to get it back. 'And that was the only thing the witch was ever known to *turn* [transform] back again. She *turned* a many things, but never a one back again but that.'

This seems like a travesty of the incident so common in German folk-tales, where the peasant who does some service to the leader of the Wild Hunt, or ferries the departing Dwarfs over the river, is

[1] KELLY, *Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition*, pp. 225, 240.

rewarded by the gift of what at the time seems rubbish, but when afterwards examined proves to be pure gold.

From these wild legends we will return to real life, and conclude this chapter with the melancholy history of one whose evil life and pretended sorceries made her deserve, as far as any one can do so, her reputation as a witch.

'Nanny Morgan,' as she was commonly called, is still well remembered by many people at Wenlock. 'Ah, she was a bad old woman,' said one. 'I've 'eerd things on 'er as would make yore flesh creep. I'd be sorry to repeat the things as I '*ave* 'eerd. I hope I'm preparin' for a better world than to have my thoughts on such as them.' Other less scrupulous neighbours told how, in Nanny's girlhood, she was concerned in a robbery at the house of a Mrs. Powell at Bourton near Wenlock, together with Mary Beamond, a servant of the house. The clothes which the latter stole were found in Nanny's possession, and both were tried for the offence at Shrewsbury Assizes, and found guilty. The girl Beamond was transported, it is said, but her companion escaped with imprisonment.[1]

After she came out of gaol, Nanny joined a party of gipsies, from whom she learned to tell fortunes with cards. How long she

[1] I have before me as I write, a letter written by Nanny to her father just before the trial.

'Salop prison March 16th 1809

'This coms with my dutey to you and my Mother, And hope you will send Me sum Monney as I have inploid Atturney and a counseler and I hope I shall see you up a Long with Me as The time his draing verey near at hand as the Asizes begin to Morrow weak and I think you had better com up the day befor and Mary Beamman bids to be rembered to hur Mother and hur must geet hur sum monney for hur with Out fail and send it or bring it with hur wen hur coms a Long with you

'Pleas to send us answer to hus as soon as Posible you can so No More at present

from your dutieful Dauter Ann Williams

Mary Beammun.'

'The asizes begin March 24'

'To Mr. Richard Williams, Westwood, Near Much Wenlock, Shropsheer, forward this letter with speed.'

By the end of her life the witch had become 'Ann Williams, alias Morgan, alias Evans.'

Mary Beamond was one of the children of Betty Beamond, who is remembered as the last person who did penance in a white sheet at Wenlock.

continued to lead a wandering life I do not know, but in course of time she again settled in her native place (probably in her father's house), at Westwood Common, between Much Wenlock and the village of Bourton. Here she told fortunes to all the country-side. 'And told 'em very true, too,' said one of the many people in Wenlock who recollect her, and who proceeded to describe how Nanny had warned a young woman of the speaker's acquaintance that a certain young man would one day court her, and prove inconstant. The girl did not heed her warning, and believed the young man's professions of affection when he did, as the witch had foretold, make love to her, but he afterwards married some one else.

She was consulted by servant girls for miles round, and even, it was believed, by many people who ought to have known better. After her death a quantity of jewellery was found in her house, obtained from her customers in payment for her services; besides many letters, bearing (it was reported) the signatures of ladies of education and position in the neighbourhood.

She was supposed to practise witchcraft, and to have the *evil eye*. 'Everybody was frightened at her,' say the Wenlock people, 'and no one durst refuse her nothing, for fear she should do something at them. And she kep' a box full of live toads in the house, and the place *fair swărmed* with cats.'

At last, in her sixty-ninth year, Nanny Morgan came to a shocking end. On the 12th September, 1857, she was found lying dead in her house, stabbed on face and neck and wrist, and just as she lay, they tell us, she was buried. No one was found to pay the last offices to the detested witch, and not even the shoes were removed from her corpse.[1]

On the day of her death, a young man who lodged with her was seen leaving the house with blood upon his clothes. He was arrested, and tried for the murder at the spring assizes. It appeared

[1] 'To die in the shoes,' from being originally a cant expression meaning 'to be hanged,' seems at length to have been thought a disgrace in itself. 'In October, 1837, an inquest was held in the neighbourhood of Oswestry, near Llanymynech, on the Shropshire side of the border, on a man who had hung himself. It was stated that "to prevent the disgrace of dying in his shoes, he had carefully taken them off."' (Communicated by Mr. Askew Roberts.)

that the old woman had had a violent affection for him, and that he was completely under her influence. It was known that he had often wished to escape from the thraldom in which she held him, but he believed that she could by her arts force him to return to her wherever he might be, and he dreaded her spells too much to venture to break free. On the day in question he had been from home, and on his return she, angered by his absence, gave way to her ungoverned temper and greeted him with a storm of abusive taunts. It was urged that, maddened with rage and fear, he stabbed her recklessly and repeatedly,—not with any thought of murder, but simply to free himself from the witch's power,—and then fled from the cottage. He was, however, condemned to death, but many of the jury and of the county magistrates petitioned for a commutation of the sentence, and it was not carried into effect.

Wenlock folk have not lost the art of legend-making. At the time of which we have been speaking, transportation had already been abolished for several years, nevertheless they tell us that the criminal was sentenced to be transported, but that the vessel in which he sailed went down on the voyage, and the man who had so narrowly escaped hanging could not escape drowning. And the popular verdict—implied if not expressed—would seem to be like that of the 'barbarous people' of Melita: 'Surely this man is a murderer, whom . . . . Vengeance suffereth not to live.'

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARMING AND DIVINATION.

"Bring the holy crust of bread,
Lay it underneath the head;
'Tis a certain charm to keep
Hags away, while children sleep."

"Let the superstitious wife
Neer the child's heart lay a knife:
Point be up, and haft be downe;
While she gossips in the towne,
This 'mongst other mystick charms
Keeps the sleeping child from harms."

HERRICK'S *Hesperides.*

"*Citizen's Daughter.* Come, Agatha, I'd not be seen to greet
A witch like this upon the public street;
But on Saint Andrew's Eve she let me see
In flesh and blood, my lover that's to be."

Faust, Part I. Act I. sc. ii. (*tr. Sir Theodore Martin*).

N June, 1882, a man living near Madeley-on-Severn, found in a crevice of one of the joists of his kitchen chimney a folded paper, sealed with red wax, on which the following words were neatly written,—

'I charge all witches and ghosts to depart from this house, in the great name of Jehovah and Alpha and Omega.'

This is a *charm* in the stricter sense of the word, which properly implies a magic *song* of some kind, or at least some form of words, spoken or written. But any talisman or preservative from evil is now-a-days called a charm.[1]

[1] The uneducated in Shropshire (and probably in other counties) make a distinction between the meanings of *charm* and *spell*, which does not seem always to be observed by literary men. A spell is used to work evil, a charm

Of the many charms used to counteract or prevent witchcraft the favourites are—Horseshoes, Silver, Spittle, and the Sign of the Cross.

Horseshoes are still nailed upon stable-doors in Shropshire, though not many people know, or at any rate will own, any reason for it except that it is 'lucky'; but at Edgmond, where in my childhood our stable-door was adorned with three rows of horseshoes arranged in a triangular pattern, the grooms avowed plainly that they were hung there 'to keep the witches out.'[1] The 'cogs,' or heels of the shoe, must be placed uppermost, according to an Oswestry informant, but I do not think this is invariable. Nor is it only on stable-doors that the horseshoe is used. An old horseshoe hung over the door of a house or room will prevent nightmare, according to Sarah Mason of Baschurch, who also informs us that 'a horseshoe nailed over the door the wrong way up will cure a haunted house, and prevent all evil spirits from entering.' This is corroborated by other North Salopians. Mr. Jesse Wood (The Aqueduct, Madeley) writes of the horse's or ass's shoe nailed over a cottage door as 'a precaution against witchcraft' in common use in that neighbourhood. Even at Shrewsbury, the county town itself, we are assured that horseshoes may be seen fastened above the lintel, or to the door-post, inside some of the houses in the lower parts of the town.

In Mrs. Bray's time, horseshoes were affixed to the mine-sheds on Dartmoor with the avowed intention of preventing witchcraft; and the explanation was given that 'the devil always travels in circles, and that he is consequently interrupted when he arrives at either of the heels of the shoe, and obliged to take a retrograde course.'[2] Whatever the original reason for the use of the horseshoe

to counteract it. It seems a curious trace of the exorcising powers claimed by the Roman clergy, that, of two words of originally very similar meaning (see *charm* and *spell* in SKEAT, *Concise Etym. Dict.*), the imported Latin one should be applied only to blessings, and the native English one should be restricted to 'banning' alone.

[1] 'To keep the wild horse away' was the reason given by an Essex boy. *Choice Notes*, p. 65.

[2] BRAY, *Traditions of Devon*, III. 255. While these sheets are passing through the press, this charming writer has passed to her rest, at the ripe age of ninety-two.

charm may be, it is certainly not this! I am inclined to think that the virtue originally resided, not so much in the horseshoe as in the metal of which it was made. In all the old folk-tales, iron and steel have the power of dissolving enchantments. Welsh fairies and goblins vanish at a blow from 'cold iron,' or even at the sight of a knife. Throughout Scandinavia, Trolls of all kinds are rendered harmless and powerless by throwing a knife, hammer, rifle barrel, or any steel weapon over them. Swedish bathers charm the waters by throwing steel into them. In Scotland, a piece of 'cold iron' laid in the bed of a newly-made mother secures her from being carried away by the fairies, and in Sweden some steel instrument is laid in the child's cradle for the same purpose.[1]

In agreement with this, we think in Shropshire, not only that it is lucky to find a horseshoe, but that it is lucky to find old iron of any kind.

The best-known metal charm, however, is *silver*. It was thought that a witch could only be wounded by a silver bullet. A goodwife at Moreton Say (near Market Drayton, North-east Salop) is accustomed to put a *silver coin* into the churn when the cream swells instead of turning to butter. In Northumberland it must be a crooked sixpence.[2] My Lancashire kindred were in the habit of using a silver spoon for the same purpose. It is curious that this is almost the only trace I have met with in Shropshire of the ill-doings of witches in the dairy, where they are generally so busy. But for comparison with the customs of other places, the object of putting the coin in the churn would hardly have been intelligible.

Spitting is a very ancient and nearly universal charm. Among our kindred nations it seems to have been used to ratify bargains, as a guarantee of good faith. In the Prose Edda, the treaty of peace between the Œsir and Vanir is confirmed by each party

[1] WIRT SIKES, *British Goblins*, p. 52 (who erroneously thinks that this is a peculiarity of *Welsh* folk-lore). HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 230. THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, II. pp. 9, 10, 15, 19, 75, 82, 204, 205. SIR W. SCOTT, *Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 159. NAPIER, *Folk-Lore of the West of Scotland*, p. 20. AUBREY, *Remains of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (F. L. S.), p. 104. Also remarks in CAMPBELL, *Tales of the West Highlands*, Vol. I. *Introduction*, p. lxxiv.

[2] HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 183.

spitting into a jar. The Durham schoolboys in Mr. Henderson's youth used to 'spit their faith' by way of an oath or solemn pledge. Spitting on your own hand before shaking hands is used to clench a bargain in Scotland.[1] Compare with these customs the singular fashion of greeting which prevails about Ruyton-of-the-Eleven-Towns, (North-west Salop), and probably in other parts of Shropshire. A man seizes his friend's hand, holds it flat open, spits on the palm; then wipes it with his own lower arm, beginning from the elbow, gives it a sound open-handed clap, and finishes off with a vigorous shake.

Akin to these practices is that of spitting on money received in payment for goods sold. Many farmers, butchers, market-women, etc. in North Shropshire (and perhaps elsewhere) spit on all money paid to them 'for luck,' and hawkers, etc. consider it particularly unlucky not to spit on the *first* coin received in the day. The reason of the custom is probably that given in Lemon's *Dictionary* (quoted in Brand's *Antiquities*[2]), viz. to prevent its 'vanishing away like a fairy gift.' 'Should you receive money from a witch,' writes Mr. Henderson, quoting the *Wilkie MS.*, 'put it at once into your mouth, for fear the donor should spirit it away and supply its place with a round stone or slate, which otherwise she might do at pleasure.'[3] This explains these obscure practices at once.

Long before the Christian era, Greeks and Romans smeared their children's faces with spittle to preserve them from the 'evil eye,' and spat three times at the sight of a madman or an epileptic—beings always supposed to be in some way 'possessed' and uncanny.[4] In like manner, many Salopians of the present day spit on seeing or hearing that ill-omened bird, the magpie; the Worthen folk do so to prevent 'bad luck' following, if by mischance they pass under a ladder; and others cure a 'stitch' in the side or 'pins and needles'

[1] HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 32. NAPIER, *Folk-Lore of the West of Scotland*, p. 100, where many uses of spittle in confirmation of bargains and in divination are noted.

[2] HAZLITT'S ed., Vol. III. p. 231.

[3] HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 181.

[4] See FARRAR'S *Life of St. Paul*, Vol. I. 658, note 1. An article on Superstition in HONE'S *Year Book* (p. 253) speaks of spitting three times to avert ill-luck from meeting a squinting (evil-eyed ?) person, or from passing under a ladder.

in the feet by the application of saliva. An old nurse, a native of Newport, taught myself and my relatives to make the sign of the cross with spittle on the sole of the shoe, to cure 'the feet being asleep' as we called the last-mentioned annoyance, and we believed it to be an effectual remedy. Exactly the same process is used by persons known to us at Shrewsbury and at Clun to cure pain in the side.

This brings us to a very favourite but obviously less ancient charm, the *Sign of the Cross*, which in some places[1] used alone to cure both the above ailments. In brewing and baking it is used as a direct preventive of witchcraft. 'In Shropshire,' said an elderly maid-servant from the Shiffnal neighbourhood,[2] 'we always make a cross on the flour before baking, and on the malt before mashing up for brewing. It's to keep it from being bewitched.' I once persuaded an Edgmond woman to own to this reason for crossing the flour, but generally, 'It is to prevent the bread being heavy', is all that can be obtained by way of explanation. The practice is general throughout the county, and so also, I believe, is the habit of pricking a cross on the loaves with a fork or skewer, before they are put into the oven, 'to prevent them going mouldy,' as another woman said when questioned.[3]

Not only must the malt be crossed before brewing, but the bungholes of the beer-barrels when they are stopped up are always marked with a cross. This custom is not peculiar to England. In Danish tradition is a story of a little humpbacked Troll who came to a woman of Holmby to borrow a cask of beer for a wedding. The goodwife took him down into the cellar and bade him take his choice. 'Cross off!' said the little Troll, for all the barrels were

[1] Holland: THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, Vol. III. 332. Northamptonshire: *Choice Notes*, p. 11.

[2] Whose folk-lore sayings were communicated to *Notes and Queries* in June, 1875, by a correspondent whom I am permitted to name as Miss Jackson's valued friend and helper, Mr. A. J. Munby, F.S.A., of the Inner Temple. This woman will be hereafter referred to as 'Mr. Munby's Shropshire servant.'

[3] Near Bridgnorth these marks are very elaborately made. A St. Andrew's cross is *scored* on the loaf, and four holes are *pricked* between its arms, thus forming *two* crosses.

marked with the holy sign, and he could not touch any of them till she had removed it, when he walked off with the largest barrel on his hump. On the third day the loan was duly returned. Were it not for the cross on the barrel, the Trolls would be able to steal the beer, without need of borrowing.[1]

'A ghost will not come where a cross is worn,' writes Sarah Mason. This, as I have before pointed out (ch. xii.), is the reason why ghosts are buried at *cross*-roads. A 'four-lane-end,' or cross-road, is the prescribed spot at which to leave stones or grains with which warts have been charmed. Hairs taken from the cross on a donkey's back are used to cure whooping cough. Many a time have I seen two persons washing their hands in the same basin make the sign of the cross over the water to prevent a quarrel.

The exorcising powers of the clergy seem to be occasionally in request even now, if we may judge from the anecdote of the Parson of Enville in the last chapter; but in the eighteenth century they were still in full force. An old local history, written about 1750, tells how some fifty years before, an 'unlucky' (= mischievous) boy, servant to one Thomas Newns of Horton near Wem, 'that lived where Brown does now, took it into his head to hide his master's plough-irons and give it out that they were conveyed away by witchcraft.' His tale met with so much credence that he was encouraged to play other pranks, and at length even to set the house on fire. 'Mr. Hughes, curate of Wem [from 1698 to 1708, and again in 1710-11], *being desired to pray in the house that was disturbed, after he had done his office*, called for his horse, whereupon the boy came running to acquaint them that the Parson's saddle was gone. Mr. Hughes was positive that *the witch had no power over it, because he had honestly paid for it*, and therefore caused a diligent search to be made for the saddle, which was found secreted in a hayloft. This caused the boy to be very much suspected,' and he was taken before the justices, when he presently confessed his misdeeds, which were rewarded by a whipping and imprisonment in the 'house of correction.'[2]

[1] THORPE, *Northern Mythology*, Vol. II. pp. 123, 132.

[2] GARBET, *History of Wem*, p. 308. The italics are the present writer's.

Ideas have changed since the times of Mr. Hughes and his simple-minded chronicler, and now-a-days the victims of witchcraft usually have recourse not to the parish priest, but to the charmer, to 'take the spell off' them. I have myself never heard any generic name applied to these curious personages by the peasantry. Particular individuals used in the Newport neighbourhood to be mentioned as 'a verra cliver owd mon, as lived at (such a place), an' knowed a dyell [deal] about disaises an' sich loike, an' if annybody 'ad lost annythink, he cud tell 'em wheer it were gone;' and Mr. T. P. Marshall writes from Market Drayton that 'no particular name is applied to those persons who themselves pretend, or are believed by others, to possess the power of charming;' they are usually said to be 'verra cliver at them mek o' things.' The old man at Oakengates (mentioned in the last chapter) seems to have used the term 'wise-woman', which Bishop How also uses in his story of Kitty Williams. The *Word-Book* gives the names Wise-man and Wise-woman as being in use in the South-west of Shropshire, and Cunning-man or woman as the expressions used about Ellesmere and Shrewsbury. A Conjurer is another name sometimes heard. The powers supposed to be exercised by these people sometimes differed very little from those of the witch,[1] and were occasionally equally harmful, so that charmer and counter-charmer had sometimes to be employed, as in the following anecdote.

The people at a certain farm between Alveley and Quat (in South-east Salop) once missed some turkeys, and suspected a young man in the neighbourhood of the theft. So they went to an old woman in Kidderminster, who 'judged' it to him. It was said that this woman could bring trouble on those whom she 'judged' guilty of any such crime, by making them blind or lame, or 'anythin' o' that,' and the young man's aunt at Kinlet (who was, moreover, convinced of his innocence) was very much concerned for him, and consulted an old man called John Malpass on his behalf. Old John gave her a written copy of a verse from the Bible, which would ensure the lad's safety from witchcraft as long as he carried

[1] Only the witch seems to have had diabolical powers of evil, and the charmer to have acted by means of his 'science falsely so-called.'

it about him, and his cousin (then a little girl), who told me the story, took it to him one Sunday morning at the farm where he was in service. The affair happened some forty years ago, but this little circumstance had impressed it firmly on her memory.

'Todley Tom,' the hero of one of old John Thomas's Bishop's Castle stories, would seem to have practised astrology. 'Oh, iss,' said the old man, when asked to tell the tale, 'I knowed Todley Tum well. He was a labourer, and lived o' the side o' Todley 'Ill—that was how he got his name. He had three daaters—the chaps used to go courtin' to the daaters. He was this sort of a man—if anybody had any grudge, if I had anything of a grudge at you, Mr. B., sir, and was to go to him (and give him something, you know), he could bring trouble on you by *working a spell*, that was what they called it. I knowed a man as had a cock for a cock-fait [fight]. (There was a jell [deal] o' cock faitin' about those parts when I was a lad.) Well, this man, he wanted very bad to know which cock 'ud win, so he went to old Todley Tum an' give him something, and he was to make the cock appear. Not the *real* cock, you know, but like the *likeness* of it. He *kest* [cast] *the planets*, I suppose, to show it. Oh, iss [yes], he showed it him, and that was the cock as won.'

'Job Rogers, I remember him well, 'e anna bin jed [dead] so many 'ears. He lived at Mr. Berwick's at the More Farm, and he went to Todley Tum to know if he should be drawed for the militia or nod. Todley Tum was a good while afore he towd [told] him, and so Job Rogers got in a bit of a pet, and axed him, why didna he tell him? so Todley towd him nod to put himself in a pet, for he should be at home in no time. (Todley Hill, where Tum lived, is three mile from the More Farm.) So when Todley Tum had towd him about whether he should be drawed for the militia or not, he axed him how he should like to go wum [home], whether he'd go high, low, or level. He choosed to go high, for he was afeard o' being dregged through the brairs [briars], and then Todley Tum give the word, and off he went, up in the air, iver so haigh [high], and dropped him down in the More farm-yard. Job Rogers told his butties[1] in the farm-yard that he could remember coming over the poplar trees at the

[1] Butty = a 'mate,' fellow-workman, comrade. See *Shropshire Word-Book*.

bottom of the cow pastur'. The poplar trees bin there now. He was livin' when I left that part, old Tum was, but that's fifty years back, and I dunna know when he died.'[1]

'Dick Spot the Conjurer,' who lived at Oswestry in the eighteenth century, obtained the honour of a biography, which may be found by the curious among the pamphlets in the British Museum.[2] His real name was Richard Morris, the nickname 'Spot' was given to him on account of a black spot on his face. He was a Derbyshire man by birth, and related both to Sir Richard Arkwright of 'spinning-jenny' fame, and to the founders of the Soho Manufactory in Staffordshire. He was an excellent mechanic, and was believed to be able to find his way anywhere without directions. He was early left an orphan, and was brought up by his mother's sister, 'Mrs. Deborah Heathcote,' who was in the habit of telling fortunes at the rate of half-a-crown each, by which means she 'added to her independent income,' but her nephew, who surpassed her in the art, used to charge a guinea. Among other things, he foretold the murder of the King of Sweden in 1792, four months beforehand. His own death, at the age of eighty-three, occurred at Oswestry in the following year, and even here his prophetical powers were brought into play. 'There was heard a very extraordinary rapping against the wainscot of the room he died in, and of which he seemed sensible but not affected by it, for when his attendants asked him if he heard the noise behind the wainscot, he faintly answered "Yes;" and a little while after he said, "My continuance will be determined by the light of the lamp, which will go out before morning," and which assuredly came to pass as he said.'[3]

To come to more modern times. A conjurer, as I am informed the people call him, by name W— T—, is now living at Yardington, near Whitchurch. He is a tinker by trade, and his magical powers were formerly in great request. About 1874, an old woman of Bletchley, near Moreton Say, lost some potatoes, and also a

[1] The Welsh *Bwbach*, which occasionally carries mortals through the air, offers them the choice of going 'above wind, amid wind, or below wind.' See WIRT SIKES, *British Goblins*, pp. 157—165, especially p. 164. See also *ante*, p. 159, note 1.

[2] See *Byegones* for March, 1878, p. 23.

[3] See *ante*, p. 139, note 3.

pair of sheets which she had hung out in her garden to dry, and she went all the way to Whitchurch to consult this man about it. It was a nine miles' walk, but 'there *was* none nearer,' so she trudged off bravely. The tinker assured her that the potatoes 'was eat,' but that she would get the sheets back, and in about a fortnight she found them hanging on the hedge off which they had been stolen. One would think that W— T— must have had private reasons for the information he gave! He was not so happy in another case, when he was consulted as to the whereabouts of a young man who was 'missing.' He replied that he was 'quite comfortable and with his friends.' Shortly afterwards the poor fellow was found under the ice in the canal. Probably this shook public confidence in the conjurer, for I am informed that few people seem to know of his pretensions now-a-days.

Another conjurer or wizard, who formerly lived at Yockleton, west of Shrewsbury, must have been nearly contemporary with Todley Tom. On one occasion, a woman whose husband had deserted her went to this man to try and get him back, or at least to find out where he was. The man went through some sort of ceremony or incantation, and had hardly ended, when a great black cat appeared outside on the window-sill, and rubbed itself against the panes. Both man and woman ran for their lives, making sure it was the *Old Lad* himself, come to 'fetch' them! The method of divination which this conjurer used was the favourite old one of the Bible and Key; only instead of a Bible he used an old book of 'The Life of Guy Earl of Warwick,' or 'Wăr-wick' as it was always pronounced![1]

'The Bible and Key,' says our friend and correspondent Mrs. N——, writing in 1871 from a village in Corve Dale, 'has come to be chiefly used for detecting dishonest servants or children in farm-houses, and in this is very useful. The culprit generally confesses at once, and receives some slight punishment, when all is 'well.' Not always, however, does the matter end so successfully. In De-

[1] If a printed history of Guy of Warwick was in circulation among the peasantry of West Shropshire early in this century, it is easy to understand how his name became connected with the legend of the Cow of Mitchell's Fold.

cember, 1878, one Mrs. Martha Cad, living in Ludlow, missed a sheet, and proceeded to 'turn the Key on the Bible' to discover who had stolen it. She and a party of friends went to the back-yards of several neighbours in succession, and at each they opened the Bible, the injured party crossed her forefingers over it, the key was balanced on the fingers, the name of the person living in the house was mentioned, and as Mrs. Cad (who should have done so) could not read, her neighbour, Mrs. Mary Ann Collier, repeated for her the sixteenth verse of the first chapter of Ruth ('Whither thou goest I will go,' etc.). The key remained motionless till they reached the yard belonging to Mrs. Elizabeth Oliver, when as soon as her name was mentioned, they declared that both key and Bible turned completely out of their hands. They then tried whether the theft was committed by 'daylight or dark,' and the key turned at 'daylight.' On the 27th December Mrs. Collier met Mrs. Oliver, and took occasion to inform her, with 'nice derangement of epitaphs,' that she was 'a daylight thief.' Mrs. Oliver charged her at the Ludlow Borough Sessions on the 8th January, 1879, with using abusive language, and the whole story came out in Court, accompanied by a renewed wrangle between the pair, and a great display of interest on the part of many believers in the divination who were present, and one of whom, being called as a witness, averred that at the mention of a thief's name the key invariably begins to jerk about, so that 'no power can keep it still:' much to the astonishment of the Mayor and his colleagues, who dismissed the case.[1]

Exactly the same thing has just happened again. A Mrs. Caroline Pardoe of Upper Gaolford, Ludlow, lately lost a watch from the room in which her daughter, recently dead, had lain ill, and suspected her neighbour, Ellen Wall, who had helped her to nurse the sick child, of having stolen it. So she 'turned the key on the Bible, and when Mrs. Wall's name was called, it fell to the ground ten times.' She then, in no measured terms, accused Mrs. Wall of the theft, and on

[1] *Chester Courant*, 15 Jan., 1879. *Ludlow Advertiser*, 11 Jan., 1879. The latter paper says that two persons must touch 'the ends of their five-fingers to form a cross over the Bible.' The cross would then be formed by the contact of the four middle-fingers. 'Five-fingers' seems to be a Corve Dale term for the hand, see 'Foxes or the Fi'-Fingers,' in *Shropshire Word-Book*.

February 13th, 1883, the latter charged her at the Ludlow Borough Sessions with having used abusive language to her on the preceding 27th January. Mrs. Pardoe, who gave the Bench the benefit of her opinions on the subject at great length, took out a cross-summons for the same offence against Mrs. Wall's son, for having retorted in his mother's cause, and the matter ended with the infliction of a shilling fine on both parties.[1]

This divination was known at Worthen fifty years ago, if not since. Staffordshire lasses still use it to discover true lovers, thus. Place a key in a Bible at the text Ruth i. 15, 16, tie it firmly with the inquirer's left garter, let two persons rest the projecting ends of the key on their forefingers, and both book and key will turn over when the name of the right man is spoken.[2] So also in Scotland, where thieves are detected by Psalm l. 18, 'When thou sawest a thief,' etc.[3]

Mrs. N. (before quoted) writes, that about 1861 she saw the Divining Rod in actual use in Corve Street, Ludlow. It was, she says, 'a droll scene—the detective police and the old charmer with his queer-shaped rod, both engaged in search of the proceeds of a robbery and of the thieves. The hazel wand had the best of it, and pointed right into an old house, where both were found. The police

[1] *Shropshire Guardian*, 17th Feb., 1883, and other local papers.

[2] A German method. 'An inherited key must be laid in an inherited Bible, so that the wards of the key come to the text of St. John (i. 1), but the ring of the key must project beyond the book. Now bind this fast with thread, and hang it by the end of the thread to the ceiling of the room, then each of two persons lays hold under the ring of the key and lets go again. The injured person asks, "Has a witch been to my cow?" The other must answer "No;" the first rejoins "Yes;" and the two continue to repeat, the one "No," and the other "Yes," for some time. If the cow is really bewitched, the Bible begins to move in a circle, and can then be further questioned; but if no witchcraft has taken place, or a witch has been consulted about the injury, the key remains motionless.'—GRIMM, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1063, *note*.

[3] NAPIER, *Folk-Lore of the West of Scotland*, 106. The Bible and Key has superseded the old heathen method of divination by the Sieve and Shears, which was kept up in England as late as the 16th century, and is scarcely yet extinct in Germany. The fullest English account of the Bible and Key is in HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 232. See also BRAND'S *Antiquities*, Bohn's ed., III. 351. A good modern instance in HONE, *Year Book*, 254; another in BRAY'S *Traditions of Devon* (but I have not the reference). Sarah Mason prescribed as a cure for nose-bleeding, to tie the patient's left garter round the family Bible, and put a key on the back of the neck.

seemed to have as much faith as the bystanders, and to be very glad of the assistance. But,' she adds, 'the divining rod process of catching a thief or discovering stolen goods is not so much used now as formerly, both clergy and dissenters denouncing it as contrary to the word of God.'

The Rod is perhaps the very oldest magical instrument now extant, for it seems to have been used in Egypt in the time of Moses. In its modern form as the Divining Rod, it is a forked stick cut either from the witch elm or the hazel (Mrs. N. informs us that both trees are, or were, used for the purpose in Corve Dale), and supposed, in the hands of skilled persons, to bend in the direction of criminals, lost property, hidden treasures, veins of ore, or springs of water. Many have been the experiments made to ascertain whether it has really some kind of attraction towards water, or towards metals, as a magnet has towards iron, and there are still perhaps some persons who believe in it for the former purpose. But the truth seems to be that the magic powers attributed to the Divining Rod are but a part of a great family of myths growing out of an early theory that trees and plants, with their mysterious growth and habits, so different from those of the animal world, were at the same time both embodiments of deity, and also the real source whence the human race has sprung. Thus a rod or slip properly cut from one of these mysterious trees, was a certain talisman of good fortune, whose innate divinity made it able to discover to the possessor all kinds of things which it might be profitable to him to know.[1]

Many divinations may be performed without professional aid, but it is not very easy to obtain particulars of them, as the young women, among whom they are chiefly practised, do not care to let them come to the knowledge of their superiors. J— S—, however,

[1] See BARING-GOULD, *Curious Myths*, 1st series (2nd ed., 1868), p. 55, for a full history of the uses and experiments to which the Divining Rod has been put, and an account of the various methods of holding it, etc. The commonest plan was to hold the forks, when the stem of the rod pointed downwards on any discovery. A useful article in the *Cornhill Magazine*, Jan. 1883, adds some other particulars. HONE, *Year Book*, 1588, and *Notes and Queries*, 5th S., X, 295, have late instances of its use in discovering springs of water. See KELLY, *Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition*, ch. vi., vii., for the mythological side of the matter.

a young woman from the Market Drayton neighbourhood, lately confessed that she had actually made one of a party of six girls who sat up till midnight one All Saints' Eve, to discover which of them should be married first. Each of them took a shift and hung it over the back of a chair before the fire, and all waited in silence until the clock struck twelve. Then they repeated a charm which our informant unfortunately had forgotten. It was to be said very slowly, and to last exactly ten minutes, and the girl whose shift moved first after the formula was completed, would be the first to marry.

The old women whose acquaintance I made at Much Wenlock, also knew this divination. It is only a modified form of a much more powerful and uncanny love-spell, the effect of which was to make the beloved object, or the future husband, appear *in proprîâ personâ*. On Midsummer Eve 'I took a clean shift,' says a character in *The Connoisseur*, 'and wetted it, and turned it wrong-side-out, and hung it to the fire upon the back of a chair; and very likely my sweetheart would have come and turned it right again (for I heard his step), but I was frightened and could not help speaking, which broke the charm.'[1] A variety of this is, to lay sprigs of red sage in a basin of water and hang up the shifts; the future husband of each girl will come and sprinkle her shift with her own sprig of sage.[2]

'Then there's plucking the sage-tree at twelve at night,' said Mrs. Dudley suddenly; 'do you know that?' And used as I am to the Shropshire and Staffordshire habit of speaking of low-growing plants as *trees*, I was obliged to ask an explanation before I gathered that the 'sage-*tree*' was no other than the homely herb with which the landlady in the nursery song lured her ducks to their own destruction. 'Plucking the sage-tree', however, is a favourite Shropshire charm.

[1] Quoted by HONE, *Every Day Book*, I, 850. The same charm is used on St. Agnes' or St. Mark's Eve in Norfolk, on New Year's Eve or on Hallow E'en in Scotland, and on Midsummer Eve in Sussex, where it is very common; see HENDERSON, *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties*, p. 101, and *Folk-Lore Record*, Vol. I. 33.

[2] HENDERSON, *ut supra*, quoting from the *Universal Fortune Teller*. The rosemary branches formerly carried at weddings, seem to have been dipped in scented waters. BRAND, *Antiquities*, Vol. II. 73 (Hazlitt's ed.).